Abstract

Title of Document:	PERFORMANCE IN ONES AND ZEROS: NO-BUDGET CINEMA IN THE DIGITAL ERA.
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Narrative feature filmmaking has traditionally been an elite art form practiced by moneyed, culturally powerful individuals through institutions in specific locations around the world. With the worldwide dissemination of the digital camera, however, non-professional self-financed, no budget, outsider filmmakers worldwide now practice the art form. This community of digital filmmakers numbers in the hundreds-of-thousands. They show their work in festivals ranging from fringe, smaller venues in places such as Jakarta and Milan, to massive international festivals in Cannes or Sundance. The dissertation examines the world of the no-budget DIY digital filmmaker and the festivals that display their work. I utilize the tools of the ethnographer to explore the meaning of film festival, to record red carpet performativity, and to track the accumulation of stature by digital filmmakers.

The methodology blends practice-based research, surveys both quantitative and qualitative, archival database research, and an examination of the mediated with the embodied, looking at both the filmmaker and the digital film in festival space. The artists studied are building processes that stand apart from traditional "Hollywood" systems. Like the subjects of my ethnography, I work outside of Hollywood with

little money, making digital films while I build my own performative and off-camera identity in festival spaces.

The embodied performance of Filmmaker on the red carpet at international festivals, small and large, is a powerful and unique vehicle for identity creation. The digital camera allows outsiders—middle income, excluded, non-western, or non-professional artists—to perform identities once exclusively controlled by powerful institutions and by the individuals inside those organizations. This research project examines the performativity of film festival spaces, the archiving of these moments for purposes of building new identities and socio-cultural status, and the assertion of power outside of traditional structures. It is concerned with identity creation through the process of filmmaking (capture, representation, reinterpretation, revision, assertion) and the formation of a self-made, artistic sense of self.

PERFORMANCE IN ONES AND ZEROS: NO-BUDGET CINEMA IN THE
DIGITAL ERA

By

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Dedication

Dedicated to no-budget digital filmmakers laboring to create a new art form with few

or no resources.

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Photographs

List of Illustrations

Introduction

Shomshuklla "Shom" Das sat at a banquet table in Nice, France on May 16, 2015, waiting to hear if her low-budget experimental film would win a trophy from a fringe festival on the Riviera. Shom had flown 13 hours from Mumbai to Nice to attend the premiere screening of *Hopscotch,* a non-narrative, non-linear feature film produced digitally for $15,000 in India.[1] Dressed in a black evening gown, sequins reflecting the stage lighting, she drank champagne as she waited to hear her name called. She was one of more than a hundred fringe filmmakers in attendance at the Hotel Westminster ballroom along the Promenade des Anglais. For these outsider, low budget, filmmakers (myself included)—screenwriters, producers, and directors with no Hollywood agent, studio financing, or access to professional crews—this was their Hollywood red carpet premiere, their Academy Awards, their Sundance.[2]

None of the films at this festival would be blockbuster hits or Oscar winners waiting to be unearthed. This was an obscure event held 20 kilometers down the beach from the glamorous Cannes Film Festival; yet, the two worlds could not be more distinct. The Cannes Film Festival, held in May each year, draws the biggest names in the global film business. Every day during the two-week event at Cannes, great films are discovered, honored, sold, and promoted, while multi-million-dollar

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[1] http://www.imdb.com/title/tt4634458/

[2] I use the term outsider to refer to filmmakers without access to investors, banks, studios or famous actors. Insiders, I assert have some access to some of these resources, even though they may not work for a major studio. Many Indie filmmakers are insiders using this distinction that I draw. Other ethnographers use different a construct to frame the medium. Sheri Ortner for example employs a studio-indie dichotomy. The fringe artists I profile have the resources to buy a digital camera, attend a festival in a foreign country, don formal wear. They are not poor, in general, they are outside traditional film communities in Hollywood, New York and foreign capitals.

deals are struck onboard the yachts that line the harbor. The St. Tropez International Film Festival might as well have been 2000 km away. Nevertheless, the indie-film competition was intense and Shom wanted to win. She chatted nervously with the nine other filmmakers at her ballroom table, part of a newly forming community of digital independent film-industry outsiders. The Nice festival, and thousands of fringe festivals like it, cultivate a "family" or "network" of filmmakers. These artists, drawn from all over the world, bond, commiserate, and form friendships that keep them going festival to festival and film to film. On this night Shom was the lone representative of her film at the awards banquet; the rest of her cast and crew were not able to make the flight from India. The others at the table had also flown halfway around the planet: *Parallax* was made in San Diego, California, while our film, *Aspirin for the Masses*, was made in Washington, D.C.

After two hours, the filmmakers at our table still sat without a trophy. Before the night was done, however, *Parallax* won Best Editing in an English Language Feature Film, and *Hopscotch* took home the award for Best Actress in a Foreign Film. Sohini Mukherjee Roy had won the best actress trophy, which Shom received with bubbling enthusiasm and gratitude. By the completion of the festivities, this was a happy table. The writers, directors, actors, editors had been acknowledged for their work, joined a new community, donned formal wear, and sipped champagne. The outsiders had played insider for a night. They had pushed past an imaginary barrier to proclaim themselves filmmakers, and to prove their new status had taken home a small trophy.

We live and work in an era of massive changes in media, observational experience, and performance practice. Digital technologies have transformed cinema in ways that are structurally significant, altering the means of reaching audiences. In the new digital marketplace, filmmakers can achieve tens of millions of hits—a measurement of online screenings—with few financial barriers to entry. These artists can also reach smaller, but geographically diverse audiences in new and exciting ways. In this dissertation, I ask: What is *filmmaking*? How has *film*—its consumption and its community of members (makers and audiences)—evolved in the digital era? Filmmaking is a term that has shed traditional meanings—but in what ways? Table 1 below compares the two eras in film history, roughly divided into analog film and digital. Although the digital era began around 1999, the two eras overlap into the current period. As a result, proclaiming an end to film cannot be done quite yet.

The transition from film to digital has opened the means of production while leaving aesthetic considerations largely intact. Therefore, while the material means of making film has shifted, the essential examination of what a film is remains unchanged. Film has come unmoored from film stock, the original media used to make movies, but its significance as a cultural form has endured. For filmmakers and spectators, film is still film, irrespective of the media used.

Table 1

Film and Digital Eras, 1890's – 2018

	Film Era	Digital Era
Date range	1890s–2018	1999–2018
Primary media	film celluloid	digital tape, disc, and computer memory card
Distribution	film festivals and theaters, television	online streaming, at "film" festivals and in the theater, television, tablets, telephones
Costs	expensive cameras, film stock, crew, feature films cost millions of dollars	digital cameras across a broad price range and digital recording media, feature films can be made for hundreds of millions of dollars or a few thousand dollars
Concentration of industry	studio control of production/distribution. film industry vertically/horizontally controlled	studio control over big budget film production and large-scale distribution to theatres; individual ownership of smaller films, cameras; free and low-cost distribution online

Digital media producers, sometimes studios but more often individual producer/consumers, upload millions of hours of video to the internet every year. YouTube is the most popular of the online platforms. Three-hundred hours of original content is uploaded to YouTube every minute, sixty times per hour, 24-hours per day from all parts of the globe in seventy-six distinct languages.[3] This democratization of the form has changed the definitions of *film* and *cinema*, so that now material shot on a low-end flip camera can be included in film festivals and considered legitimate filmmaking. I investigate what this means for the filmmaking as a practice, specifically, those who make no-budget cinema, and those in the audience who may or may not know the difference or care to discern. Questions addressed include: 1)

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[3] https://fortunelords.com/youtube-statistics/ (accessed 1/30/2018)

How does the performance of the artist alongside the text in a festival space color reception of both? 2) Is the no-budget filmmaker a threat, nuisance, or apprentice to Hollywood? 3) What constitutes the digital "elite"? 4) What is the new measure of cultural capital and artistic authority in this dynamic, fluctuating, and competitive world? 5) What is the new artistic "fringe" in filmmaking, and has the traditional fringe (pre-2000) become the new mainstream? 6) What are the goals of digital outsider-filmmakers?

The subversion of centralized mechanisms of production gives outsider do-it-yourself (DIY) filmmakers access to the worldwide cinematic audience. There is a worldwide proliferation of fringe film festivals, working in parallel to the massive international festivals and distribution markets such as The Cannes Film Festival and Cannes Marketplace.[4] This is an exciting time to examine the transformation in performative behavior both within and surrounding the digital visual world. For the first time, the fringe performer, producer, and director can reach an audience of millions in a matter of days, and the politically subversive filmmaker can reach a smaller—but still significant—audience without risking financial retaliation or a recut of their work by moneyed powers.

The economics of digital filmmaking is a focus, including the dismantling of financial barriers that previously excluded outsider voices in cinema, fostering new ways of working, new processes, new aesthetics, and a new measurement of what is "professional." I assert that digital cinema is a type of *community* project—even a

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[4] The Cannes Marketplace runs in parallel to the Cannes Film Festival in May of every year. The festival celebrates the best in world cinema while the marketplace hosts the dealmakers who run film as a business. One event is at the summit of film as a cultural institution, and the other is film as an international business. Both events are big money, glamorous and elite.

community theater—where the association of people is worldwide, digital, diverse, often very small, and at times site-specific, but a community nonetheless.

Digital filmmaking is considered in three broad categories:

1) Process

    a. Process includes a discussion of economics, expertise, and technology.

    b. The assignment of responsibilities when the entire cast and crew are volunteers.

2) Art form

    a. The art section focuses on aesthetics, standards, and laurels (film festival prizes).

    b. The content of the films.

3) Community: The Red Carpet, Performativity, Liveness and the Spotlight

    a. An examination of community, which includes the filmmakers and the audience, both digital and embodied, and which is worldwide in scope.

    b. The distribution of these films to festivals;

    c. The creation of social capital through that process;

    d. The creation and performance of the artistic identity in festival spaces.

The research methodology involved seeking evidence of unique and perhaps otherwise disenfranchised points of view, as well as newly developing aesthetic criteria. The goal is to understand the community of film artists who work with digital

cameras, challenge definitions of professionalism, and respond to the great

filmmaking traditions of the past with more energy than resources. My study focuses

on digital narrative filmmaking. In using the term narrative, I am referencing the

tradition of movies that employ actors in mimesis to portray characters within a story

arc. This can be problematic since contemporary filmmakers experiment with

traditional film form. It is nonetheless a helpful limiting device—the stories of our

lives and our histories are documented through dramatic human narrative. This

dissertation is a telling of the history of specific filmmakers. I focus on narrative

digital film because, like Shom and the team behind *Parallax*, I am myself a

writer/director of digital dramatic film.

Digital Filmmaking Process

The intersection of money, technology, and the digital market has transformed

production practice by freeing producers from traditional structures, institutions, and

poles of power. Foundational transformations in filmmaking technology have affected

production practices in the self-financed digital filmmaking community, where the

subversion of centralized mechanisms of production and distribution allows non-

commercial, and arguably, "alternative" voices to proliferate with less input from

institutions that have traditionally owned the means of production in the film

industry. I use the term alternative to refer to artists, filmmakers, and performers who

are not a part of the big-budget or Hollywood production and distribution hierarchy. [5]

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[5] Studios controlled nearly the entire film industry during Hollywood's "Golden Era," and in decades
since have controlled much of big-budget film. Filmmakers could be, and were, "blacklisted" by film
studios, effectively ending their careers. While there were independent producers, the studios held
almost unchecked power over the filmmaking medium. This blacklisting can be read as done in order

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These filmmakers work outside the industry, making films that will never see distribution at mainstream movie theaters. Digital film is fertile ground for research. Many of the structures, possibilities, and limitations of digital media have not been named, realized, or even conceived, and they continue to change rapidly. Individual artists use digital cinema as a tool for expressing themselves relatively free from external or market forces.

In the current era, filmmakers can simply purchase their own digital camera if a production entity (or several) do not want to back their work. These cameras can cost as little as $300-$500 or as much as $3000-$5000. The Canon 5D and Sony Alpha 7 cameras, for example, are at the top of this budget range but can shoot an image of similar aesthetic quality to cameras used in a big-budget film. Many of the filmmakers considered in this research—including my students and myself—own cameras somewhere in this price range.

I am interested in "no-budget" digital filmmaking. In this widely practiced art form, filmmakers make their projects with unnamed actors, budgets under $25,000, and less costly digital cameras. Digital cinema is not just for no-budget directors. Traditional distinctions between amateur and professional are problematized in the digital era. Professionals working in Hollywood today have an alternative in the digital camera that they can employ even on big budget films. Hollywood producers make "Indie" films that cost one to eight million dollars using bank financing, foreign

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to keep the American government out of the movie business, the studios acting as a mechanism of control on behalf of anti-communist forces in government and society.

tax credits, and international rights sales to fund their films. [6] These are films labeled

as independent by the Hollywood press and film scholars since the major studios,

such as Disney or Sony, do not fund the initial production. The major studios,

however, often distribute the finished films. They buy the rights after a successful

debut at Sundance, Toronto and other festivals, for example. They use big name

actors and shoot in multiple locations around the world, with some or complete

independence from studio chiefs.[7] Producers working in this subcategory of the

current cinema must raise capital for every project from financiers who see

independent movies as good business. This study does not focus on those

filmmakers.[8]

The evolution in camera technology has allowed digital upstarts to challenge

Hollywood. Today, nearly everyone around the world with access to a smartphone

owns a high-quality digital camera. Many of these cameras produce an image that

reads as near professional or *professional enough*, meaning that a casual viewer will

judge the movie to be real based on its image quality or look. Fringe filmmaking

speaks to an audience underserved by Hollywood studios and million-dollar indie

projects. The newcomers work outside the big studio gates in less privileged

communities with fewer financial resources. Their work provides an alternative to the

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[6] Drawn from my field notes, a talk giving by Paul Eyers of Prosperity Films at the St. Tropez Film Festival in May 2015. The talk intended to help digital no-budget filmmakers move into bigger-budget productions.
[7] For a complete discussion of this kind of filmmaking, see Sheri Ortner's 2013 comprehensive study of Indie film titled, *Not Hollywood: Independent Film at the Twilight of the American Dream*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. 2013
[8] Ironically, many film festivals include these parameters as a category of competition. No budget means a production cost of under $25,000 for most festivals; this somewhat ironically comments on the film industry, as only in the world of film is $25,000 considered "no budget."

huge-budget, market-driven cinema, and even Indie cinema.[9] While such work is smaller in scale, both in terms of production and distribution, generating big box office receipts is not required. This form has the potential to upend the film medium and marketplace. During this research, I investigated the processes used by fringe, outsider filmmakers. These outsiders often commit years of effort with volunteer casts and crews. In the new age of digital cinema, these fringe artists have the tools of production in their pockets; they also own editing equipment and control the means of distribution. In other words, feature filmmaking can be truly low cost, with $25,000 being at the outer edge of what most DIY filmmakers spend—we spent roughly $10,000 on our film over the seven years of production and post-production. Further, little professional training is required, and few barriers to entry exists for this art form. It's fair to ask if this is a utopian ideal, a construct that collapses when tested. Are DIY film artists exploring a new form, or simply apprenticing to Hollywood as film students have traditionally apprenticed, but with better cameras. Perhaps both.

This is a decidedly non-union form. Union workers employ professional standards, experienced workflows and high-level skills in acting, cinematography, directing, production management and design. Their work is of higher quality than the DIY filmmakers, but they are expensive. DIY must be largely non-union (unfortunately) if it to also be no-budget. There are exceptions, however, the Sceen Actor's Guild will allow members to work on low budget sets for a rate of

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[9] In my work, I use the terms film and cinema interchangeably, reflecting standard usage in festivals worldwide, but cinema is perhaps the more appropriate term since it can be both digital and filmed. Additionally, cinema encompasses the entire cinematic space (screen and audience) much in the same way mise-en-scene described an entire theatre from the stage to the stalls (as conceived by Wagner) before cinematic scholars applied it to the film screen exclusively.

approximately $100 per day. But even these numbers are out of reach for DIY, as we found when casting our movie.

Photograph 1

Production Still, Aspirin for the Masses. Digital camera, student crew, unpaid actors, University of Maryland bus lent for production.

My research area concerns the years after 2010, near the beginning of the Digital Single Lens Reflex (DSLR) camera revolution. The DSLR marks an important demarcation point in the study of filmmaking as it signals a shift in technology that enabled outsider filmmakers to achieve high aesthetic standards for a historically low financial investment. Before DSLR, many outsider filmmakers worked in video (with a few able to afford 16mm film). The distinction between DSLR memory cards and videotape is significant. Since its invention in the middle of the twentieth century, videotape has accumulated significantly less cultural capital than film. To many people's eyes, mine included, videotape simply does not *look* like

film.[10] *Look* is an important aesthetic component in the overall construction of moving pictures, and to most viewers, videotape comes across as less desirable, less meaningful, and less beautiful than filmed images. Setting aside aesthetics, there is a crucial ontological distinction to drew between videotape and DSLR. Because DSLR video records directly onto a computer memory card, it never exists on tape and is therefore free of the vulgar associations of videotape and its cultural subordination to film. It both looks better, and it is physically distinct from taped media in this crucial way. Wyatt (1999) described digital cinema as a merging of two forms and two symbolic constructs. He wrote that digital cinema is not film or video, but a new form that combines elements of both: "There is too much that is new in digital cinema to allow it to be defined by earlier imaging systems."[11] This new form is vital and vibrant.

Art Form

No-budget American filmmaking has an interesting history. In the past, a handful of filmmakers *were* able to complete narrative films for very little money. Working outside of the studio system, they managed to make artistically, and sometimes commercially, significant films. Such filmmaking was far less widely practiced than DSLR or DIY filmmaking is today, but it does provide an important historical precedent to today's digital filmmaking. Early examples of low-budget filmmakers include John Waters, Satyajit Ray, Pericles Lewnes, Jim Jarmusch, Ron Rice, Kevin Smith, and even Christopher Nolan. Relatively well-known film

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[10] I'm a 20-year television veteran who has worked almost exclusively in video, analog and digital.
[11] Wyatt, Roger, "The Emergence of a Digital Cinema, Computers and the Humanities", *Computers and the Humanities*, Vol. 33, No. 4, Digital Images (Dec., 1999), pp. 365-381

examples include *Pather Panchali*, *Pi*, *Red Neck Zombies, The Blair Witch Project*, *Clerks, Following*, and *The Lollipop Generation*. These films were often constructed with found film stock, from 8mm to 35mm, or even videotape using borrowed equipment. What distinguishes the contemporary era from its predecessor is *scale*. During the analog film era, few directors could work in a very low-budget environment, and fewer still became Hollywood insiders. In the digital era, however, thousands of filmmakers can work within the constraints of zero budget. As a result, the work they are producing is forcing us to rethink the categories by which we define cinema.

"Fringe" digital filmmaking, and specifically self-financed DIY filmmaking, is quickly shedding its outsider status and becoming a widely practiced artistic activity.[12] This type of cinema is now included in nearly all film festivals, both domestic and international. I discovered a world of weirdness. Freed from financial constraints, filmmakers could strive for wonder without considerations of profit. These films express outsider individualities and perspectives, and they use non-traditional narrative structures. Often, they suffer from a lack of resources or professionalism, exhibiting instead individual voice. To see this work, one must attend a fringe film festival or find the work online in a sea of digital media postings. Festival juries serve as arbiters finding the best of DIY film output. To get to those screenings, however, you must first traverse the red carpet in a shared site-specific space.

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[12] I am also interested in the larger worldwide community of digital filmmakers, including films with bigger budgets and named stars, but feel that a narrower focus for this study is imperative.

Community: The Red Carpet, Performativity, Liveness and the Spotlight

The digital film community is diverse. Artists from all categories of life—from around the world, advantaged and disadvantaged, outsider and insider—feel compelled to pick up a digital camera and make a movie. Traditional barriers are blown apart by this impulse in myriad social constructs, allowing a newly meaningful exploration of identity in film events, whether large or small. This community connects in screening rooms, online and on the red carpet.

The red carpet is a special place that is electric with meaning. It is where you dress your finest, strut your stuff, and perform for the media and fans. Of all the red carpets in the world, perhaps the one in Cannes is the biggest. Reporter Brian Johnson described the Cannes Film Festival red carpet as "where the Hollywood dream is incarnated with Olympian grandeur." He called Cannes the "high altar of world cinema," where "avid pilgrims" gather to watch the stars climb a "red-carpet stairway to heaven."[13] The red carpet is a place to dream of success, celebrity, stature. Erin Walsh, stylist to Hollywood actors, says of the red carpet: it "would be so boring if we didn't bother to look for new ways to dream."[14] The embodied performance of filmmaker in this space is a significant and rewarding component of the fringe production process. The performance of filmmaker in shared festival environments can supplant distribution online (in most cases) as the most significant moment in the process of fringe filmmaking. Although online distribution allows a film consumption worldwide, the filmmaker cannot be a part of that construct until after the screening is

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[13] Brian D Johnson, "Magic Red-Carpet Rides," *Maclean's*, 5/24/2004-5/31/2004, Vol. 117 Issue 21/22, p82-83.
[14] Claire Coghlan, "New Revolutionaries Rule the Red Carpet", *Variety*. 12/8/2016, Vol. 334 Issue 8, p8-12.

finished and the online viewing or "hit" is tabulated. This distancing in digital space reflects a traditional alienation between the producer and the consumer in media, new and old, whereas the performance of the film in a shared festival space creates a living moment between the filmmaker and the audience that is of lasting significance.

The festivals award certificates and trophies (or sometimes sashes). These artifacts become a living archive of the moment and hold more totemic value than the ongoing online consumption—registered as "hits"—of the digital film. My observations reveal that the film festival screening is an end to itself. Many filmmakers dream of "fame" and a big budget job around the corner, but those things rarely materialize. Festival participation posted to the Facebook wall, and then hung on the actual wall, is the satisfying end to the difficult labor of making a fringe film.

I initially questioned whether artists should be sorted into categories such as race, socioeconomic status, and nationality, or, alternatively, whether each filmmaker should be viewed as a unique, individual force. Digital filmmakers work in a field that employs unmistakable kinds of identity creation, breaking down distinctions between the mediated and the embodied. The digital camera allows a deep dive into identity, politics, and performativity in new ways, and from a twenty-first-century perspective.

As someone who is white, male, straight, Christian, Western and economically privileged I was reticent to describe queer, non-Western, non-white identity creation, sign construction, and interpretation for fear of introducing bias. I can offer, however, ethnographic study and description, critical textual analysis, interviews, primary sources, testimony, and theoretical framing of my observations.

Further, the digital technology provides an opportunity to bypass some of these obstacles, by connecting with my subjects through use of shared sign systems, thereby relegating some obvious difference to the background. For example, I often ask digital artists if they employ the same tools that I do. In this new world, some categories of difference can be momentarily set aside when searching for artistic connection. "Are you Team Canon or Team Nikon?" is a question that nearly every digital DSLR filmmaker across backgrounds will recognize as authentic. Nearly all of us working in DSLR cinema have used one or another of these technologies, and like Twilight film fandom, we can divide ourselves into our own self-defined communities.[15] None of us abandons our racial, ethnic, gender, or social-economic selves, but we nonetheless find a temporary work-around in the shared festival space.[16]

The filmmaker's physical body is displayed in association with their work in a festival space. This physical presence is both separate from but also essential to the growth of the community. The performance of the artist, his or her attendance in the screening room, on the red carpet, in the bar after the event is key to the reception of the artistic product. The film is digital, most of the cast, crew, construction mediated, but still we revel in the living connection to the filmmaker in this festive space. We rely on both the live performance of the artist. The art better received in the presence of its maker. This living interchange between artist, media, and audience is essential

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[15] Sony and Panasonic are making great strides with mirrorless DSLR cameras; hence the question may need to be reworked in the future.

[16] I am referencing the period of my primary research when the DSLR was most widely used. Filmmakers today shooting in 4K are transitioning into mirrorless cameras made by Sony, Panasonic, are using their phones, and are using Cannon, Nikon cameras and lenses. The community is splintering as technology improves further still.

to the construction of community, and the creation of identity to the fringe filmmaker. Community, identity, art is interwoven permanently in this space, at the events at the end of the red carpet.

Research Methodology

I investigated the process of working outside of filmmaking institutions, including the freedoms implicit in working independently of large pools of capital, and the performances of directors, actors, crews, and designers on a fringe film set, many of whom work voluntarily or with the expectation of shared ownership of the project. I observed these and other directors, actors, writers, and producers at film festivals and considered how they "performed" their roles for the audience before and after the screening of their work. In conducting her research, ethnographer and film scholar Sheri Ortner engaged in what she calls "interface ethnography." This technique allows the ethnographer to study relatively closed societies by observing them in spaces where they interact with the public. In the case of filmmakers, the technique is used at festivals, where filmmakers interact with their audiences, and with other filmmakers. I employ Ortner's interface ethnography, but from the dual perspective of both a researcher and a filmmaker. I work on no-budget film sets, teach film students, and then observe filmmakers I do not know in these public festival spaces. For two decades, I have been a television professional, and I worked in theater for a decade before that. It is important to note that, like Ortner, I do not have access to Hollywood productions or star actors; my professional life is in Washington, DC, not Los Angeles. I attended the festivals as an outsider filmmaker and researcher conducting interface ethnography.

I employed practice as research in this project, primarily as a participant-observer on numerous film sets, including the set of our no-budget feature film, *Aspirin for the Masses*. My research involved a variety of direct observation methods to understand the process used by experienced and first-time no-budget filmmakers. I followed up with formal and/or informal interviews and studied filmmakers at international film festivals of varying sizes. Scholars in the field of practice-based research—also called Practice as Research—concentrate on the interplay between theory and artistic practice in performance studies (See Macleod and Holdridge 2006; Barrett and Bolt 2007; Sullivan 2009; Riley 2013).

> In the US, funding sources separate practice in the arts and academic research in the humanities absolutely (e.g. the National Endowment for the Arts versus the National Endowment for the Humanities). Private sector funding agencies tend to follow suit. For this reason, scholar-artists producing innovative work that crosses the theory–practice divide currently have to vet themselves and their projects according to the funding source, presenting either as an artist or as an academic researcher." (Riley, 2013, 178)

Riley asks how we distinguish between creative processes that are research, from those that are not. She answers that there is "something vital" at stake in making that gesture as an artist – and by saying art is research, concluding that "Sometimes it is research and sometimes it is not" (179). The artist-research makes the claim that indicates when art is serving a dual purpose.

Mark Cypher, another advocate of practice-based research asserts that concepts, knowledge and research outcomes "emerge from within a specific practical

or material relation" (2017). The defining nexus located between the artist-practitioner, the creative product, and the critical process. Further, art objects mediate the "shaping of social ties, beliefs and knowledge." Researcher Jessica Jacobs (2015) writes of the role film plays in practice-based research, citing the "wide range" of "relationships between people, objects and landscape" within the filmic image, such as "depth of field, mise-en-scene and between the frames via editing (montage)." She asserts a "multi-sensorial power that can help us explore how we communicate our feelings and connect the experiential qualities of filmic research methods to final outputs."

There were several phases of research, each overlapping. I was a participant-observer in the application process for more than 140 film festivals from 2011 to 2017. I received rejections from the bulk of the festivals I applied to, and in these instances, did not attend. When accepted, I attended as a filmmaker and screenwriter. I had a success rate of approximately 15%. In addition, I attended festivals strictly as a researcher in Cannes, France; Edinburgh, Scotland; Dublin, Ireland; and Washington, D.C.

Before the onset of my dissertation research, I observed filmmaking in two settings. These observations helped me to frame the questions I would ask in the formal research component of the project. First, I was an actor-filmmaker in the 48-Hour Film Project in Dublin, Ireland. This festival competition is active in more than 100 cities around the globe.[17] By design, the contest is 48-hours long, facilitating a fast-paced approach to filmmaking that allows for myriad observations of on-set

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[17] http://www.48hourfilm.com/weekends/

dynamics over an intense, two-day period. The 48-hour festival helped put my later

film festival participation into a research context. I watched a team of amateur

filmmakers implode, and only one member of that team complete a film for the

screening. The others simply disappeared. This helped me to see the merit of

professionalism on a film set, and it made my research approach more balanced, I'll

assert.

In addition to the 48-hour film project, during the initial stages of my research

I worked as an actor and crew member on the no-budget digital student directed

feature film *Aesthetic*. This was a feature-length film made by an undergraduate

student at the University of Maryland (with his friends). It premiered in the Stamp

Student Union in March 2013.[18] Although not part of my formal write-up, this work

enabled me to frame the on-set observations I made during my formal research. This

time on *Aesthetic* helped me to cast an objective eye on our film set during the

production of our feature film from 2010–2017.

I designed four surveys: three quantitative, one qualitative. The first, a survey

of beginning Millennial Generation film students designed to ascertain their

ambitions as digital filmmakers.[19] The second, a survey for experienced Generation

X, DIY filmmakers to gauge shifts in their work practices with the adoption of new

tools. The third, a paper-based and anonymous survey of audience members at a

work-in-progress screening of our digital feature to see if they cared as much about

imaging systems as I do (they don't). I conducted the three quantitative surveys from

June 2014 to March 2018 and received 94 completed responses. In addition, I

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[18] http://www.marylandfilmmakersclub.com/aesthetic-2013.html (accessed 1/12/18)
[19] BA students making digital short films in a Communication program.

collected 35 narrative statements in May 2015 from my fourth survey, the qualitative research of Millennial filmmakers' production workflow.

The surveys employed in this research show that filmmakers, aware of shifting workflows, are adapting quickly to the new medium of digital filmmaking. The two Millennial surveys provided valuable insight into the new digital medium by people who are currently working in it unencumbered by outdated conceptions of work process. I presumed that such participants are less burdened by questions of form than long-time filmmakers would be, and that they might possess insights into the professional and personal reasons why they make digital films. I discovered that people work in digital film for a variety of reasons: to express identity, gain entry into Hollywood, have fun, and communicate with friends, family and online communities, among other reasons.[20]

The Generation X survey attempted to ascertain the dynamics of the new media, specifically, how it is constructed, financed, and received.[21] This research made clear that filmmaking is not what it once was. Rapidly changing technologies are transforming the art quickly and permanently. The Audience Survey shows that they are less interested in the recording technology than I had anticipated. Instead, they focus on more traditional film questions such as story arc, theme, thesis, and character. The audience seems to care less about the means of production—including costs, media type, and camera used—than about the film narrative.

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[20] I conducted anonymous surveys. I did not collect any personal information including URL's. Nor did I ask student respondents to disclose ID number, name or any identifiable information. The student survey can be seen at this link: https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/8SZCQ86
[21] This survey can be seen at this link: https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/83FVBZY

I conducted database research to understand camera patents, older technologies, the use of film cameras first by professional producers and then later by individuals using non-professional tools to make home movies.[22] These tools elucidated control of the means of production. Finally, to formalize my practice as research process, I kept an extensive production journal. It included notes regarding the making of the film, my participation at multiple film festivals, and my conversations with Altar Entertainment, a sales company that marketed our film around the globe through MIPCON, NAPTE, AFM, The Toronto Market, The Cannes Marketplace, and the Dubai Film Market.[23] After conducting this research, I can present a portrait of the DIY digital film world and offer thoughts on the pressure this new artistic force is placing on film institutions both large and small.

Theoretical Framework

My research frames the work of filmmakers to understand their relationships to institutions of power, assess their expressions of identity, and interpret audience reception. This work contributes to conversations about digital cinema in both performance studies and cinema studies. It is cross disciplinary, using the methodological tools of practice-based research, ethnography and theories of performance, film, and reception to categorize and explain my findings. I braid observation and artistic exploration. The theoretical framework is comprised of the

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[22] Home movies were shot as early as 1897 using the Birtac and later the Biokam process that split a professional-quality 35mm film strip in half. It was not until 2009 that home movies could be seen as possessing the qualities of real cinema. http://www.marriottworld.com/articles/film_history.htm (accessed 3/12/18).

[23] These markets are detailed in a later section. Altar Entertainment signed my film to a 10-year distribution contract. Altar sold the film license first to a Chinese Video-on-Demand (VoD) company, and then later to Amazon Prime effective August 2, 2017.

following parts: First, an exploration of filmmaker identity on the red carpet utilizing concepts of spectacle, pageantry, gaze, and embodiment. Second, a consideration of digital performance, presence, reception and liveness in hybrid spaces utilizing Benjamin, Auslander, Farman, and Fish. Next, a consideration of "spectatorship of death" as employed in both the cinema studies and performance studies disciplines including Rodowick and Blau. Fourth, I engage theories of authorship and professionalism followed finally by Ortner's ethnographic consideration of cinematic production in Hollywood. These reflect politics, power, and commodification in ways that are relevant and compelling.

As preparation for this review, it is important to define my understanding and usage of several terms:

Cinema includes any video, film, or digital recording shown on screen to an audience. Cinema can be screened in a public space or in a private room for one.

Film has traditionally been shot, edited, and projected to an audience from analogue film-stock. The images in a film traditionally reflect a real place in time, as the actors in a film were shot in front of the camera at some point in the past, and the camera recorded that *real* event, even if it was an act of mimesis or imitation. In my experience, film festivals use the word "film" because the word "video" is vulgar in certain constructs.[24]

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[24] Perhaps the distinction is best understood in terms of a class structure. Some people in the film industry have historically seen video as lower class, inferior, without always having to articulate those feelings.

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Video refers to material recorded onto analog videotape. It is considered an inferior recording media, as in the past it was associated with television, pornographic movies and non-professional filmmaking practices such as home video. It was deemed disposable and not worthy of preservation.

Digital Cinema is neither film nor video. It is a new form shot on memory cards. It uses cameras that range from professional to consumer, including so-called *prosumer* hybrids.[25] Digital cinema shares common aesthetic constructs with both film and video. It is like film in almost every respect but resembles video in one important way: it does not require large pools of capital for its construction. Digital cinema can be as accessible to the fringe producer as a home movie video camera—or a community theater stage—but offers a nearly professional quality image, thus blurring the difference between film and digital media.

Use of these terms in film as art and business, and on the film festival circuit is worth serious scholarly consideration. I begin this review by considering spectacle and showing off on the red carpet.

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[25] Prosumer cameras are those that bridge the space between professional and consumer. For example, the Canon t6i has a CMOS video sensor that is smaller than that found in a professional-level Canon 5D Mk IV camera, and yet the t6i is still more effective than cheaper consumer options in the Canon model lineup. A beginning photographer who aspires to professional work output may buy the t6i as a prosumer starter camera.

Photograph 2

Cannes Film Festival red carpet, May 14, 2015, early morning

Spectacle and Showing Off

Much of film culture is performed through the pageantry and ritualized behaviors built around the red carpet. It is a site of exoticism, celebrity, and performativity where film artists go to receive a ritual of passage. This ritual is the primary appeal of the film festival experience. Many performance theorists argue that many cultures have lost a direct connection to ritual as a place of anointing. Film festivals offer that missing ritualized experience to the film artist. Festival is site-specific. The stars walk the carpet. The press fills the periphery. On the Cannes red carpet, for example (photograph 2), the press will set up along the edges for that night's arrivals. Fans will wait outside the barricades before a screening, so they can

ogle or possibly even meet celebrities, actors, and filmmakers. This ritualized behavior involves the act of seeing and being seen.

The aim of this competition is to build cultural capital and cultural power. Laurie Frederik (2017) in her introductory essay to *Showing Off, Showing Up* considers the act of showing off in festival competition—dance, theatre, music—she asserts that engaging in "heightened performance" fosters competition and reveals hidden truth. Showing affects society with "political, economic, and aesthetic effects" far more than "amusing diversion." In festival competition, the sport of showing "requires an expectation of or at least the potential for judgement." The rewards can be traditional—trophies or cash prizes—while at other times, they convey "a superior value system." This system of showing off is not without risk and potentially consequences, people are continually judging and being judged for "what are considered guilty pleasures."

Identity and Gaze

In the current era of digital filmmaking, we see a democratization of the means of production, meaning that untold numbers of people now control the process, and their representation in that media. Individuals can locate their voice in the media in myriad ways, in front of the camera, in voice-over, or as the invisible hand guiding the work. The result is an upending of the modes of control and normalization. The outsider contributes to the conception of identity by manipulating gaze within their own work, and by representing their own identity. In the current era, one can ask what happens when the tools of gaze and control are employed in service of a non-normative point of view. Is gaze still deviant if the so-called deviant identity holds the

mechanism of control? When one controls the camera, one controls gaze. The so-called non-normative, or so-called deviant, or minority, or outsider now owns the tools of image making. This is where identity, gaze, and theories of control intersect with the individual artist, who is freer than in the analog era (financially and artistically) when costs of production are considered. Cost is still a consideration but is less so when costs are historically low vis a vis image quality. The potential for unmasking the true self through image manipulation is a tremendous good, especially when the means of media production and distribution are in the hands of billions of people.[26] Digital filmmaking carries with it the potential to break down aspects of the panoptic construct, shattering the one-way glass between the observed and the observer.

There are myriad deviations of gaze to unearth in this study, including gaze in coercion and gaze in identity creation. There is also a darkened digital gaze that is cast backward through the media toward the audience. A producer can "watch" the audience to some degree through an analysis of the metadata left behind after the digital screening of their work. I explore this more completely in a later chapter of the dissertation where I unpack the metadata for my film *A New Burlesque*.

Digital cinema offers an opportunity to refocus discussions around gaze in the digital era. Laura Mulvey (1975) in *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* discusses gaze, specifically the male gaze directed at the female body in classical Hollywood

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[26] Dziga Vertov theorized this effect when writing of the "kino-eye."

cinema.[27] In Mulvey's construct, film's formal visual apparatus inscribes sexual difference and inequality. Mulvey borrows the Freudian term scopophilia to describe the pleasure of the sexualized controlling gaze. Paraphrasing Lacan, Mulvey writes of the ego ideal in the reflected image – the seeing of one's better self in the reflection. In Mulvey's conception, the *active* male on screen is the ego ideal while the *passive* woman on screen is the object of the male gaze, the sexualized object. To Mulvey the main paradigm in classical Hollywood cinema is of the man as actor within the plot, and the female as sexualized icon.

Theorists have long asserted that imaging systems can act as a means of social control. Michel Foucault saw image-making tools as instruments of control. Foucault (1975) argued that photography promotes a "normalizing gaze," a surveillance construct that makes it possible to "qualify, to classify and to punish." This gaze establishes over individuals "a visibility through which one differentiates and judges them."[28] We are witnessing a revolution and counter revolution in imaging systems where individuals both control new tools of image creation while simultaneously having to contend with those same tools being used as mechanisms of control in highly coordinated systems.

Embodiment

We are tied to our environment and to others in it. From this connection, we build a sense of self that reflects place and circumstance. Phenomenology describes

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human experience, asserting embodied knowledge, "the body holds truth, the mind is the body, and the body is the mind" (Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 1962, 1964).[29] Menzel and Levine (2011) assert embodying experiences are central to understanding and developing identity. In this way, our experiences make up our identity. The subjects of this research are building identities in festival space, in a manner that they must find deeply meaningful as evidenced by the costs associated with film festival participation. They are seeking to embody a new self through these events, the winning of prizes, and the wearing of laurels.

Merleau-Ponty asserted that cinema as a mode of expression can transport the senses through narrative projection of the self. Can identity formation be extended from the body into a nonembodied or imagined space? Perhaps embodiment is pushed forward into digital space for example—through imagination and the projection of the self into a digital narrative (See Jason Farman, *Mobile Interface Theory,* 2012). Because the digital world is mediated by the senses, we can extend phenomenology into the ones and zeros, to find location where story, self, and data intersect. Don Ihde (1990) asserted that humans cannot hope to "break away" from technology to perceive the world. As when glasses are used to observe a lived space, perception cannot be separated from the inanimate device (the glasses), perception is interwoven into this tool much as it can be seen to be interwoven into contemporary digital tools. Xiaobo and Yuelin posit, "A kind of self-awareness is hidden in human's relations with technology."

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[29] Quoted in Magnat, 2105.

Digital performance, Presence, Reception and Liveness in Hybrid Spaces

Traditionally, performance theorists have argued that bodies on stage and in recorded media, such as film, hold different meanings for audiences. The body on stage is *alive* while the body in media is not living but recorded. Ontologically, this distinction is significant, and in performance theory, it is unbridgeable. Liveness theory, however, breaks down this binary by offering an alternative paradigm. In performance reception, Liveness theory asks if there is really an unbridgeable delineation between live and mediated in the mind of the receiver.

Liveness over a mediatized platform is seen as equivalent to lived-interplay between bodies in a shared performance space that includes mediatized representation. Farman (2012), explores self in the digital environment, asserting that presence in digital space upends traditional understandings of the embodied, challenging the "temporal nature of presence" and reframing what constitutes "a primary action" (14). I offer an alternate reading of digital space in which the embodied experience is still tantamount, but one where projection of identity is still key. Farman posits a space where individuals lose themselves in the digital in a manner like what happens in a movie theatre, where audience projects itself into a narrative. He offers a threading of theories of phenomenology with poststructuralism, to propose a "sensory-inscribed" understanding of self that "incorporates socio-cultural inscriptions of the body" from spaces both lived and digital (13).

Farman asserts a "new sense of self" in the digital era, arguing that "presence" is achieved in virtual space. Presence can be both embodied *and* informed by digital technology. I'll assert that performance always involves the physical—even in digital

space. The digital merely adds context to the embodied presence of director, actor, filmmaker, producer, writer or audience member.[30]

Liveness is best understood in juxtaposition with traditional reception theory (Fish, 1976) employing a dynamic where the embodied and mediatized blend in reception. Theorists have grappled with the relationship between audience, text and performer for years, and are trying to keep up with the fast pace at which experiences and understanding of "digital" is developing in the 20th century. In *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture,* Philip Auslander (1999) juxtaposes live performance against recorded media showing that traditional performance theory may have undervalued recorded or mediatized performance. Auslander is applying reception theory to this construct and asking if in the mind of the receiver there such a stark delineation between live and mediatized, hence the construct Live*ness* that describes nearly-live mediatized performance. Auslander offers the example of a rock concert where attendees watch the video screen instead of the band on stage, claiming that for the audience liveness over a mediatized platform is in many ways equivalent to liveness in a performance space – and to his reading an audience may prefer the mediatized to the embodied in a performance where both are offered simultaneously, such as a rock concert. This iconoclastic approach to traditional readings of performance and performativity allows us to rethink the space between performer and audience regardless of whether that space is shared or mediatized.

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[30] The reception of a digital film at festivals is more meaningful than the reception of digital filmmaking online. In my experience, an online posting is not equivalent to an embodied presentation of my film work. I have posted 40 plus films online, achieving a modest 120,000 hits across various platforms. Although this represents a much larger number of people than have ever seen my films in person, it feels less significant to me as a performer and artist.

Auslander's interesting construct overturns a well-established orthodoxy regarding the performer-audience relationship, but it fails to account fully for the special bodily connection between actor and audience in a theatrical event. Auslander writes that there are "good reasons why people might choose to watch or listen to mediatized theatre, music and dance" and that these reasons include access, cost and the unavailability of live performers. He argues further that audiences for the performing arts are participating in mediatized versions of them far more often than in live forms probably means that live performances are in "direct competition with recorded performances." This is not a startling assertion, but when taken a step farther one can posit that the mediatized performance can feel nearly live. Liveness filtered through reception theory creates a dynamic where the embodied and mediatized blend in reception.

Auslander's study is somewhat out of date. It deals primarily with television, and to a lesser degree the internet. He refers to videotape instead of digital transmission, he has no mention of Facebook, Twitter, very little regarding YouTube. *Liveness* is thought provoking, but I think misses the mark regarding the importance of the body in performance. Critics of Auslander err in the opposite direction. Presence is a two-way street, and embodied performance is as much about the audience as it is about the performer, live presence is as much about the *alive* interaction of the audience with the media/performer as it is about the interplay from the stage. Other scholars, especially in cinema studies consider reception (See Miekle 2017, Jens 2010, and Bagley 2008), through a metaphor of "negotiation" between the audience and the televisual text.

Ranjani Mazumdar, considering the theoretical construct of liveness (2012), defines a "duality of the image" that is dependent on a "balance between the space of screen performance and what lies outside of it."[31] Fandom bridges the space, with websites, magazines, newspapers, discussion forums, and awards shows all helping to foster the audience's sense of connection to the performers. In this research, that fandom bridge is supplanted by embodied interaction with the actors and filmmakers at a festival. The room is shared, the space enclosed, the experience lived. I recall attending a premiere screening of *The Adventures of Baron Munchhausen* decades ago with director Terry Gilliam; he was not in the film but sat in the audience like me. I remember that presence more vividly than I remember the movie itself.

We should consider traditional theories surrounding aura. Aura is the unique, even priceless, aspect of a work of art. The location of aura in the digital age may be difficult to determine. Walter Benjamin "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" in *Illuminations* (1935, 1936) wrote, "Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be."[32] Benjamin was criticizing film, a medium that seemed endlessly reproducible, and thus lacking aura. We now know that to be a somewhat unfair characterization of some aspects of analogue film stock, which has a lived and living presence. To the cinephile, movies shot on film have a type of aura that digital films may lack. They have traditionally regarded the filmed image as more beautiful than the digital image. That reading may

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[31] Ranjani Mazumdar, "Film stardom after liveness,"Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies, Dec2012, Vol. 26 Issue 6, p833-844.
[32] Benjamin, Walter, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction (or Reproducibility),* 1936, 219.

be shifting, however, as digital technology evolves. Examining aura with those surveyed for this study provided compelling data; as I explain in a later chapter, my Survey IV respondents seemed to fetishize the film medium to a lesser degree than I expected (appendix 11).

As an embodied performance, theater is fundamentally more human, while media (film, television, digital) allows super-human proximity. I can get closer to a performer in media than I ever could in real life, not despite the body's absence but because of it. Liveness theorists underplay the importance of media's distancing or alienating of performer and audience, the two bodies in this construct. The National Theatre's *History Boys* is a good example of the blending of forms with an altogether unsatisfying end. It was theater that wanted to be media, and then became a film that was too much like theater, but without the special embodied connection. The magic of the festival space is that it allows for both experiences: the intrusion into intimate space during the screening and the embodied connection to the performers on the red carpet and in the Q&A following the screening.

One anecdotal example from my own experience: In 2012, I screened the entire television show *The Wire* on a seven-inch digital tablet that I held against my chest. Close-ups when viewed in this environment feel life-like; actors' faces seemed to be penetrating my personal space. This digitized performance felt "nearly" real.[33] In 2015 in London, I attended a live performance of *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* with

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[33] Importantly, when the show was produced it was not made for a tablet sitting on the viewer's chest. I doubt David Simon considered this his medium. *The Wire* was made to be screened on a standard definition television across a living room. Ontologically, the media artifact itself has been transformed in the digital transmission, in some ways by design. HBO originally released *The Wire* as a Standard Definition analog television show in a 4x3 aspect ratio. It re-released the show as a High Definition 16x9 file for digital consumption.

34

Dominic West, one of the star actors of *The Wire*, in the lead. Sitting in the audience,

sharing a performance space with West, was undoubtedly an embodied experience

that held aura. Still, I sat nearly 100 feet away from West as he performed. From the

point of reception, the close-up from a hand-held tablet felt differently-real from

watching that same actor in-person on a stage. Viewed through the theoretical lens of

Walter Benjamin's concept of aura, however, the live stage performance is superior in

all regards. In my reading of this juxtaposition, liveness theory cannot overcome

"aura," but it allows a rethinking of the embodied reception of mediatized

performance. In this construct, the shared theatrical space had aura; I don't know that

I will ever be in the presence of actor Dominic West again. Yet the digital acting

transmitted through a tablet placed on my chest felt as real, sometimes more real, and

certainly differently-real than the live performance.

In the previous examples, aura occurred only during the live performance, but

presence was felt in both the live and the digital. Media theorist Espen Ytreberg

(2009) argues that digital participation invites a sense of "presence, heightened

immediacy and involvement" in the lived event.[34] Paddy Scannell (1996) developed a

construct to elucidate the relationship between media events and audience. Broadcast

audiences have an "aura of presence" in a mediated environment. Embodied presence

exists on either side of the transmission, but without an actual physical connection.

You watch the Super Bowl from home, or you spend thousands of dollars to watch it

live.[35] The possibility of inhabiting two spaces at the same time gave immediacy

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[34] Espen Ytreberg, "Extended Liveness and Eventfulness in Multiplatform Reality Formats," *New Media & Society*, Jun 2009, Vol. 11 Issue 4, p467-485.
[35] Paddy Scannell, *Radio, Television and Modern Life*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1996, p.84-91

while also creating new possibilities of being "in two places at once." This does not quite hold up to scrutiny. Shared space is still shared space, while digital connectedness is still distinct from face-to-face interaction.

In my ethnography, I find that the digital film is not the end of process. Rather, the end is the formation of a new identity, a new living person. A rewarding aspect of fringe filmmaking is the space where the role of "filmmaker" is performed for a film festival audience. From the audience perspective, a digital film screening can feel significant because very often the screening includes the presence of the actors and filmmakers in the room. The connection between audience and filmmaker, created in the context of a live presentation of a digital work, drives this process. This relationship between the fringe filmmaker, the digital work, and the audience that first screens the film and then interacts with the artist in a Q&A is at the core of this performative space. Film is experienced deeply by both the audience and the artists when the filmmaker is in the room with an audience, during the screening, and especially during the post-film talk.

Spectatorship and Death

Tangentially (and etymologically) connected to discussions of liveness are theories concerning spectatorship of death that inform both performance studies and cinema studies. Performance theory orthodoxy asserts that the metaphor of death informs live performance. According to the traditional argument, an audience witnesses the performer move one second closer to death every second he or she is on stage. This intensifies dramatic tension in the moment, and thus, in a sense, the audience engages in a spectatorship of death as they watch the performer in a shared

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space. Theatre scholar Herbert Blau asserted that a compelling component of theater is, in a "strict sense . . . the actor's mortality… for he is right there dying in front of your eyes."[36] This notion has a compelling parallel in cinema studies, as film scholars often use a similar construct to describe the cinematic viewing experience as a spectatorship of death—the death of the film media used to record the movie—with every screening leaving new scratches and corrosion on the film print. Cinema scholar D. N. Rodowick writes of film's disintegrating stock: "Structural Impermanence is the very condition of cinema's existence."[37] Like the actor's body, the film stock is growing older and even disintegrating before the audience's eyes. No two viewings of a film print will ever be the same. This ephemerality creates a type of lived experience in the audience for both live and cinematic spectatorship. It can be magical to see a great actor on stage, but it can also be magical to see an original print of *Citizen Kane* screened at the American Film Institute. In both cases, the audience is there to see the exceptional performance or the great film, but arguably the ephemerality and spectatorship of death pulls the audience even more significantly into the event. Further, speaking of death, an interesting aspect of watching very old films is that the actors themselves are all dead (See Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 1980*).* There is a subversive appeal to watching formerly alive, now dead people perform—as if they are reaching beyond the grave, pulling you into their story. This appeal to be alive after death, or to be youthful again in old age, informs the creative process and its reception.

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[36] Herbert Blau, *Blooded Thought: Occasions of Theatre* (New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1982), 134.

[37] Rodowick, *the Virtual Life of Film*, 2-20.

Yet what if that process of decay and disintegration were reversible? In digital cinema, we witness a kind of constant rebirth. The digital sequence 11111111 may appear meaningless. In the context of digital cinema, however, it might represent the first pixel in the first frame of the film *Up*. If digital cinema is composed of ones and zeroes, which must be reconstructed *every* time a web link is clicked, that entails a kind of performance, which in its lack of physical presence is metaphorically no longer the spectatorship of death but the spectatorship of (re)creation. Digital film represents becoming rather than disappearing, and digital performance an act of creation or reconstitution.

Authorship, Control and Professionalism

Digital media, as currently practiced, allow for a blending of roles between author and viewer. One can ask, what is an author and how is that function shifting. In the current era, the author construct is problematized through widespread re-editing of digital material, rampant piracy, sampling, and digital quotation. The author may not be the singular and indefinite source of significations that fill a work (Foucault 1998, 221). Cattrysse (2010) and Finnegan (2014) posit a role for audience in authorship, both asserting a meaningful dynamic between the character's "want" and the audience's "need": "The conflict . . . plays between what a character wants to do and what they should do." The audience judges the character's actions based on their own value systems, projecting those values "onto a character as a means of engaging with the story." (Cattrysse, 90-91). In this construct, the writer presents a character's

"wants" which are in turn filtered by an audience's "need."[38] Want and need are traditional constructs in screenwriting thanks to the work of Syd Field, Robert McKee, Blake Snyder, and others. Dramatic theory from Aristotle to Snyder describes a character in pursuit of his or her dramatic "want" and the eventual realization of an internal "need." Authorship, it seems is fluid and changing in the current era.

It is important to establish the duality of the word author. It is both a legal term with practical application and a theoretical construct that allows for consideration of text in context. There is value in naming an author; it protects the individual from having her or his creative products stolen. Ideas cannot be shared in a system that does not protect the author from theft. Films require teams, sometimes numbering in the hundreds; legally the studio, the producers, the director, the writer share authorship through signed contracts and points systems. But in a larger, more ethereal sense film is made by a community of individual authors, each member of the creative team adding to the finished film. Thomas Leitch (2016), discussing traditional ownership in media, contends that the concept of authorship seeks to define "every text as private or corporate property—at any rate, as someone's property."[39]

There is a downside to this arrangement. In many instances, the system names the more powerful entity—the studio—as author. The traditional construct allows for

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[38] John Finnegan, "The screenplay and the spectator: Exploring audience identification in narrative structure," *Journal of Screenwriting*, Sep2016, Vol. 7 Issue 3, p319-330. 12p.

[39] Thomas Leitch, "Lights! Camera! Author! Authorship as Hollywood performance", *Journal of Screenwriting*, Volume 7 Number 1, 2016. Authorship is a construct built around money, it protects capital. In an imagined digital utopia, where everyone has a camera and is an artist, perhaps there is no need to guard a non-existent stockpile of revenue.

the concentration of *control* inside large organizations. The director made the film, the producer built the production teams, the writer(s) wrote the screenplay, the actors created their individual characters. But, the "rights" of authorship belong typically to the institution that funded the project. The studio is the legal author (owner) of the film. The studio in this construction can be free to act against the interests of the individual community members. In my television career, for example, I have had ideas stolen by institutional actors but had no recourse because of a power imbalance between the large institution who owned the means of production, and myself, an individual content creator who had no effective tools for fighting theft.[40] The advantage of cheap digital production is that an idea can be guarded from a studio. Individual producers acting outside of the system can hold onto an idea until it is finished, because the tools have been democratized.[41]

Changes in technology have blurred traditional distinctions in media between amateur and professional status, and digital natives/Millennials do not seem bothered by the distinction in the same way that older (Generation X and Baby Boomer generation) filmmakers might be. Martin Edie (2010)[42] characterized a "professional framework" that is in the midst of a profound transformation that includes "severe" challenges and a transforming "self-understanding." Changes in media platforms and

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[40] A powerful network VP stole a series of my pitches following a pitch session in 2008. I was told later that he took the title pages off my ideas, changed the name of the show, and made two of the shows without me. As a consolation a different executive gave me an unrelated freelance contract to fix a different show on the same network.

[41] For a further discussion of copyright in media, see Heuman (2015). My focus is not on the law, but on how individual artists are subverting or circumventing traditional obstacles to production by using digital tools.

[42] Martin Eide, "Dialogical ambiguities: journalism, professionalism and flattery", *Northern Lights: Film & Media Studies Yearbook*, 2010, Vol. 8 Issue 1, p9-23. 15p.

production technologies wrought by the digital revolution have driven these ontological transformations.

Cinematic production in the post-Hollywood digital era

Budget disparities highlight the existence of a three-tier film industry: 1) Hollywood studio films with budgets in the hundreds-of-millions, 2) Indie films with budgets often in the millions and stars familiar to a large swath of the audience, and 3) micro budget (no-budget, DIY) films made with no name actors and very little money. Sheri Ortner (2013) looks critically at the American independent film industry. She asserts that Indie films perform an implicit cultural critique by focusing on topics that Hollywood studios ignore. Indie films also tend to embrace a "harsh realism" and "display the dark realities in contemporary life," compelling the viewer to "viscerally experience and come to grips with those realities." Her informants, however, come from a "high capital background" with access to large film budgets, and their films often screen at the Sundance and Toronto film festivals before receiving high-dollar distribution deals on the indie market. These are traditionally movies with budgets lower than Disney, Fox, or Sony studio films, but far higher than the no-budget films examined in my study. Whereas Ortner examined category two, I focus on category three. Like Indies, the no-budget films tend to favor realism. Yet unlike Indies, no-budget films are generally not as well-made due to a lack of funding, and a general lack of filmmaking experience. DIY films are constrained by

lack of professionalism, even as the tools themselves become more professional at lower budget points.[43]

The key distinction to be made is that control of the tools of production is slipping away from Hollywood institutions in some circumstances. Outsiders have tools in their hands that allow them to make movies that feel real, that can be received by an audience as authentic. Hollywood still controls giant budget films, Indies are still the best films of the year with premieres in Toronto and at Sundance, but DIY is making its presence felt by wresting control of the image away from the behemoths in the film business.

Dissertation Structure

Chapter 1: Historical Considerations, Analog to Digital Cinema – Definitions, Production Practices, and Aesthetics begins with an examination of camera patents from 1881 to the present, attempting to understand why early film technology was not adopted by the wide public, but was instead used primarily as a tool of industry. Original research was conducted into those patent submissions, and where appropriate is paired with film industry structures as described by film historians. The focus is on industry structure, control of output by powerful film producers inside of studios, and the tools used to make movies from the "Golden Era"[44] through early

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[43] This is a construct that favors the middle tier of the film hierarchy described earlier, the Indie movement. More professionally made than DIY, with strong storytelling and acting, Indie still has the spirit of hand-made moviemaking evident in DIY.

[44] For further reading on Hollywood's Golden Era please see, David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, "Film Art: An Introduction", Robert Allen and Douglas Gomery, "Film History: Theory and Practice", and Douglas Gomery, "Hollywood in the Golden Era." I do not consider home movie formats such as 1898's 17.5mm, 1922 *Pathé*'s 9.5mm and Eastman Kodak's 16mm safety film because I chose a different focus, digital narrative storytelling. I am interested though in 16mm films like *Flesh,* or *Trash* because they are feature-length narratives.

digital era. The defining concept for this exploration is one of control, for as film developed in the analogue era control of the industry was tightly held, but in the digital era control is spinning wildly outward as if on a potter's wheel set a too high a speed. Later I transition into my ethnographic and practice-based research concerning the adoption and implementation of new digital technology in the current era. I will argue in these pages that digital technologies blur distinctions between amateur and professional as those technologies improve in quality while simultaneously dropping in price. It is well documented that in the analog film period of 100 plus years, the means of production and distribution created a system with horizontal and vertical control, from top to bottom and side to side. Film scholars show that this control included all production and distribution of movies from the set to the screen (hence horizontal and vertical). The studios came to control the writing, acting, production, post-production and distribution to movie theatres across the country. It was in the golden era mature oligopoly, with absolute power and control concentrated into the studios. This history has been covered extensively by Thompson and Bordwell (2010), Allen and Gomery (1993), and Gomery (1992). Contemporary tools allow for widespread access to low-cost "nearly professional" gear. This fosters a creative space where anyone can make a movie that reads as being "close-enough" to professional grade to render many old-fashioned distinctions obsolete. Many film formats were available to outsiders over the decades, Super 8mm film, VHS-C home movie cameras, CCD cameras at the turn of the century, but these image-making tools nearly always marked the material as being inferior, for amateurs. They had low

resolution, an inferior color pallet, were low contrast, or high depth of focus. There was simply no way to fake it with this gear, no chance of playing at professionalism until the digital camera revolution in 2009. 16mm film was the single format that bridged the space between amateur and professional before the current period and some noteworthy directors, Spike Lee, Jim Jarmusch, DA Penebaker, and a handful of others were able to raise the capital needed to work in 16mm film, but it was still an expensive endeavor.

Chapter one begins with a general survey of the American film industry, and transitions into my central topic of no-budget filmmaking in the Digital Single Lens Reflex (DSLR) camera period. DSLR cameras first came into the market in 2009. Although we are still in the DSLR period, we are beginning to see no-budget filmmaking shift to mirrorless 4K cameras and even cell phone-shot films. At some point, researchers will be able to date this era of filmmaking with some accuracy. The general adoption of the DSLR camera by filmmakers in the early 2010s marks the beginning of this period. The advancement of processor speed and imaging technology will mark the end of DSLR cinema as newer technologies replace current tools.

Chapter 2: Millennial Filmmakers, Digital Filmmaking Practice Unmoored from Tradition, presents the youngest DSLR no-budget film community and their work processes. Millennial or digital-native filmmakers use these cameras extensively as they grapple with technique and attempt to differentiate their approach from older artists. Narrative statements from first-time filmmakers were collected and analyzed employing the frame of metamodernism, the oscillation between poles of hyper-

sincerity and irony. Younger filmmakers work inside of social networks to a more significant degree than older directors do. Work inside social networks versus work outside such networks is a key generational distinction in this section.

Later in Chapter 2, the focus shifts to professionalism in no-budget cinema workflows, including an exploration of the "Director's Dilemma." I employ this phrase to explore the director's on-set power in a decentralized, non-professional setting. Focus shifts to an examination of surveys collected in this research. The first survey link was shared with approximately 250 film students over two years. Fifty-two anonymous surveys were returned. Additionally, a second more qualitative survey, asked younger students for a narrative accounting of their work process. Based on these responses, the following generalizations can be made: many Millennial filmmakers own their own gear, thereby controlling the entire means of production; most are aspirational, hoping to learn film technique and then transition into professional jobs in digital media or cinema; and most student auteurs are self-financing, funding their films out of pocket.

Chapter 3: Generation X, Filmmakers working in the Present while thinking of the Past, offers an analysis of Survey Two, which focused on more established Generation X, DIY filmmakers. I found that DIY filmmakers use varied means of funding their work, from bartering or product placement to fundraising campaigns on Kickstarter and Indiegogo. As with the students described above, many of these filmmakers are nonetheless self-financing to a significant degree.

Next, I explore content of films made by Generation X age filmmakers freed for perhaps the first time in their careers from corporate-controlled media. They

create content that reflects film tradition but does not always adhere to market pressures. No-budget cinema is unmoored from traditional film style—often to its detriment. Freedom of form is the hallmark of this style. No-budget movies can shed tired practices and tropes without fear of box-office disaster. Many times, this freedom is a blessing, but often it is a mixed bag. Professionalism in Hollywood filmmaking can be associated with a broadly applied standard of technical quality. Professional cinema may be boring or repetitive across a series of sequels, but Hollywood movies are typically well shot and have clean sound and professional acting. Professional films may lack soul, but they rarely lack minimum technical quality. This is not always the case with no-budget cinema.

I then examine my experience writing, directing, producing, exhibiting, and selling a no-budget digital feature. There are three models in the film business: "Big Budget" or Hollywood, "Indie" film, and no-budget digital cinema. I draw on film theory, ethnography, and performance studies to frame the work, asserting that DIY cinema creates social capital independent of budget or revenue produced. Revenue is beside the point; cultural capital and the performance of a professional self, however, is central. Our project began in 2010 and ended in 2017 when Amazon.com acquired the license to air our film online in multiple platforms worldwide.[45] During that process, we attended many international film festivals, and spent a great deal of money (on a no-budget film), borrowed equipment and gear when we could, and spent countless weekends shooting and editing.

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[45] The payments, however, from that license are slow to the point that by the time the film has broken even all the team will have moved onto many other projects, this is not a way to make a living at filmmaking. But the hope is that it will mark as capable when pitching later projects.

Chapter 4: Festival Cycle and Hierarchy provides examples of film festivals as sites where ritualized behaviors transform film artists. Research was conducted at festivals large and small, from the massive Cannes Film Festival to tiny gatherings in Jakarta and Mammoth, California. I drew on conversations with film directors who participated in festivals around the globe, conducted field research, and once again engaged in auto-ethnography when our film was in competition. This research indicated that performativity is a defining construct to understanding the walk down the red carpet at film festivals.

Chapter Four examines film festival categories, looking at budget, competition, and film as a business and an art form. I draw on my experience walking the convention floor at The Cannes Marketplace as a researcher-participant, where I met with big names in the film business, including Harvey Weinstein.[46] I attempted to set up meetings with major international studios, marketed our movie, and took field notes. At Cannes I was inside the world of big-budget filmmaking, primarily as a researcher. This chapter includes an examination of the Toronto and Sundance film festivals, where the big Indie films find a market, and, finally, to the fringe film festivals, where no-budget filmmakers find an audience, earn accolades, and gain cultural capital. I discuss the websites that act as gatekeepers to festival entry. Such websites are primarily facilitators rather than barriers to entry; entry fees are low or non-existent. This digital meet-up space allows fringe producers to interact with fringe festivals, bridging distances of thousands of miles and vast cultural spaces. The

[46] The meeting took place before the explosive sexual abuse scandal that contributed to 2017's #MeToo movement. I can assert that digital technology and a micro-budget allowed me to work around Weinstein and his type in Hollywood.

analysis concludes with an examination of red carpet performativity, ritualized behaviors, and liminality. It juxtaposes digital vs. embodied, prioritizing the latter as a more rewarding experience due to the human connection that takes place in the lived space.

In Chapter 5: Laurels – The Printed Archive, I examine the posting of archived moments from a film festival, capturing the liminal journey of a fringe film from obscurity to social media recognition, an essential step in capitalizing on awards and declaring new stature. Theory from Taylor, Chomsky, and Turner frames observations about the meaning of online postings of those lived moments. I conclude with an analysis of Twitter, Facebook, and IMDb submissions in an attempt to locate the value of such postings.

Later an exploration of the Audience for DSLR Cinema, rounds out the chapter. Beginning with the issue of reception, I assert that the audience for digital DIY cinema completes the movie in their minds by filtering it through a set of expectations. Using the audience surveys referenced earlier, I attempted to draw out audience feelings and responses to digital versus analog film. I found—to my great surprise—that audiences do not seem to distinguish or much care about the difference. They will screen a movie, whether at a festival or theater, to immerse themselves in a narrative experience, irrespective of the media.

Finally, this concludes with digital distribution, examining the purchase of digital DIY films by websites, specifically Amazon Prime. These websites acquire the rights to low cost movies for a low fee. They are used to bulk up the library. In the end, the means of distribution to an online audience for the film *TikTok* is no different

from that of a recent big-budget blockbuster—say, *Captain America*—once that film

has left the cinema and reached the end of its market run. In the end, all categories of

film live side-by-side on Amazon Prime, competing for online viewers.[47]

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[47] I do not include Netflix since that website requires bigger budgets and better cameras than my informants are using. No one in my fringe DIY research was able to get their film placed on Netflix or Hulu, although many ended up on Amazon Prime.

Chapter 1: Historical Considerations, Analog to Digital Cinema – Definitions, Production Practices, and Aesthetics

Camera technology from the analogue and digital film eras is fascinating because it influenced film industry structures, at times tangentially, often directly. The history is relatively recent, well archived, and quickly changing. Often, 1989, 1999 and 2009 are not considered historical, but recent changes in technology have rendered massive upheavals in artistic and industry practice. In this history, it is evident that new tools allow for widespread access to low-cost, nearly professional gear, which fosters a creative space where, in the current era, anyone can make a movie that reads as close-enough to professional quality to render many old-fashioned distinctions, and mechanisms of control as obsolete. As mentioned in the introduction, the notion of control is central, and in a brief period, control of the film business has transformed. Huge film studios still make massive movies, as they have through and since Hollywood's so-called Golden Era. Independent producers make artistically significant and narratively compelling features that vie yearly for Academy Awards and film festival laurels, but in the very recent period of the past decade, digital DIY films have been made around the globe free from traditional institutional forms of control.[48]

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[48] I assume a teleological model where Hollywood classicism is the primary mode of film construction and distribution. I am not dismissive of non-Hollywood movie making, I recognize that before WWI there were film centers in France and Italy that were larger than American production facilities. I am also not dismissive of independent films made outside of Hollywood during the so-called Golden Era, films made in locations around the world, in the Japanese film industry, the Swedish, the Russian. I am simply focusing my comparison on digital DIY as opposed to Hollywood studio as a limiting device. For further reading on Hollywood production history see Jonathan Auerbach's *Body Shots,* and Thomas Elsaesser and Malte Hagener, *Film Theory: An Introduction through the Senses.*

This chapter begins with an examination of the technology used by filmmakers, amateur and professional, with a focus on patents from 1881 to the current era. Interwoven into the examination of the US patent database archive, I present a short general overview of industry structure and the tools used to make movies, from the silent period to the Golden Era into the current digital era. [49] This overview is constructed from the work of significant film scholars who have explored film history. Outside scholarship builds a platform for my research findings. Film historians have documented, for example, that in the analog film period American studios created a system with horizontal and vertical control from top to bottom and side to side. They spent massive amounts of capital and came to dominate the world film industry for 100+ years. This history has been covered extensively by Robert Allen and Douglas Gomery (1993), Kristen Thompson and David Bordwell (2010), and Gomery (1992). I provide a general survey of the American commercial film industry. This quick survey allows for an overview of the research topic: no-budget filmmaking in the Digital Single Lens Reflex (DSLR) camera period. DSLR cameras came to the marketplace in 2009. An end to this period is anticipated soon, due to the advancement of processor speed and imaging technology. We can begin to see in no-budget filmmaking a shift to 4K cameras, even cell phone-shot film. I imagine a rapidly approaching end to the DSLR era with the widespread inclusion of 4K cameras in mobile phones and the elimination of mirrors in the "Mirrorless DSLR" 4K camera (the mirror is the key component in the SLR mechanism).

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[49] For further reading on Hollywood's Golden Era see Kristin Thompson and David Bordwell's, *Film History*, Bordwell and Thompson's *Film Art: An Introduction*, Robert Allen and Douglas Gomery, *Film History: Theory and Practice*, and Douglas Gomery, *Hollywood in the Golden Era*.

The American Commercial Film Industry—Control of the Means of Production

The studio system was a patriarchal construct with the studio head at the top of the hierarchy. The moguls who ran the American film business during its Golden Era were Louis B. Mayer at MGM, Darryl F. Zanuck at 20th Century Fox, Harry Cohn at Columbia, Jack Warner at Warner Bros., David O. Selznick at SIP, Carl Laemmle at Universal, and Adolph Zukor at Paramount. Film historian Wheeler Winston Dixon asserts that the end of the classical studio era was prefigured by the "death of the men—and they were all men—who ran the various production companies."[50] In this period when "Hollywood really became Hollywood," executives implemented vertical integration with control of production, distribution and theater ownership. Movies were mass-produced to the extent that film "became the fifth-biggest industry in the U.S."[51] Traditional audiences grew to recognize this medium—commercial, narrative, polished, expensive, and professional—as "real" film. Experimentation was relegated primarily to the avant-garde, small producers in America and abroad, and academia.

For most of film history, American studios maintained tight control of production and only industry technicians, engineers and experts, not the public, knew film industry technology and distribution methods. This section details aspects of control by studios, examines some of the technologies employed, and considers certain film artists who seemed able to transcend market constraints by imprinting their work with individual style signatures. This stands in contrast to the current

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[50] Wheeler Winston Dixon, *Death of the Moguls: The End of Classical Hollywood*, New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 2012, Pg. 7.
[51] Dixon (2012), 7

system in which power is significantly less centralized. The variety of film studios in the US and the massive number of producers overseas before the start of WWI offers a compelling parallel to the DSLR era. There was a freedom there before Hollywood figured out huge budget movies. Thompson and Bordwell describe productions around the world after World War One in places like Mexico, Australia, Columbia, Argentina, Ireland and other nations that did not have developed film studios. They structured themselves in important ways that were built in opposition to Hollywood hegemony, "filmmakers frequently sought to differentiate their low-budget films from the more polished imported works by using national literature and history as sources for their stories" (79). They shot outdoors in natural light, or in interesting local locations, historical buildings.

For much of film history, from the Lumière brothers to Steven Spielberg, filmmakers shot on film, which was manipulated by hand, cut into strips with razors, and taped together into its final form. The work was physical, tactile. Feature films required capital, often reaching tens and then hundreds of millions of dollars per film as the industry matured. In cinema's first century-plus, from the 1890s to the 2010s, individuals did not own the means of producing and distributing a professional-quality film. Cameras were too expensive and too big, the costs of film and processing were beyond the financial resources of most individuals, and distribution to theaters was tightly controlled. The Bell & Howell 2709 camera, for example, was used extensively in American film studios after its introduction in 1911. One auction site describes it as "so expensive that only studios—and Charlie Chaplin (plus a few

others)—could buy them."[52] In 1923 Bell & Howell manufactured the first spring-activated, all aluminum 2709 camera. It sold for $175 during the Roaring Twenties ($2,526 in 2017 dollars). This cost was for the camera body alone, and did not include film stock, processing, projector, actors or technicians. Some of the more widely used cameras during the early period were Edison's Kinetograph camera, the Kinetoscope[53] (after 1892 both a camera and a peephole viewer), the Lumière Cinematograph (which was both a camera and a projector), and later the Bell & Howell camera.[54]

As the medium developed, the price of cameras grew astronomically and became even more out of reach to outsiders. For example, the Cinerama camera, used to shoot 1962's *How the West Was Won*, used multiple magazines of unexposed film running simultaneously past three lenses built into a single camera housing. The camera had a 146-degree field of vision. Actor Robert Preston said, "Every time you move the camera two feet, the set decorators have to dress two hundred acres of land."[55] It created an amazing image, but the rig weighed 800 pounds and required a team of technicians to operate. After the Cinerama camera was retired, the Super 70 Panavision camera came into wide use by film studios. Many beloved movies from the 1960's and 1970's including *The Godfather* and *2001: A Space Odyssey* used the

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[52] http://www.calkovsky.com/sold-bell-howell-2709-hand-crank-35mm-camera-hoover-dam-camera-1/ (Accessed 11/6/17)

[53] Edison borrowed the name of the original Kinetoscope in branding his later projection systems. https://www.thoughtco.com/history-of-the-kinetoscope-1992032 (accessed 3/12/18).

[54] https://chicagology.com/silentmovies/bellhowell2709/ (accessed 11/6/17)

[55] http://www.widescreenmuseum.com/widescreen/cineramacam.htm (Accessed 11/6/17)

Super 70.[56] The Panavision camera was expensive to rent on a weekly basis and used primarily by film studios.

Early in the digital era, however, traditional film studios began to employ digital technology, opening the door to a rethinking of film aesthetics and a shift in status for non-traditional filmmaking. This shifting aesthetic marks the beginning of the digital revolution, located chronologically at the start of filmmaking's second century. We can examine two cameras used almost exclusively by the commercial film industry, the Arriflex and the Arri Alexa, employing the 2006 and 2017 Arri camera price lists. Before 2006 and into the current period, this was (and still is) considered top-level professional film equipment and the prices reflect that. The 2006 version shot film, while the 2017 camera shoots digital media. The 2006 Arriflex 16mm film camera listed for 38,000 Euro in the 2006 catalog.[57] This converts to $45,562 inflation-adjusted U.S. dollars. This price was for the camera body alone, and did not include the cost of a viewfinder, film magazines, light meters, tripod, and lenses. Prime lenses list in 2006 for 14,500–17,100 euros each and zoom control for 4,500 Euros. These were all pieces that had to be rented or purchased to operate this camera professionally. By 2017, in this past-year's catalog, they offer digital camera kits for use at the top of the filmmaking hierarchy; these kits list for 68,252 Euros, or approximately $80,000 at current exchange rates.[58] Arri prices have not fallen during the digital revolution, as the company's strategy has been to maintain control at the

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[56] Panavision started with the Super Panatar projection lens, a device attached to projectors. In 1954, the device cost $1,100 (Roughly $10,100 2017 Dollars). This lens attachment allowed theaters to project movies shot in nearly any format. An expensive investment even for a professional enterprise, impossible for an amateur filmmaker or projectionist.
[57] http://www.cineused.com/2006_05-15_ARRI_Camera_Price_List.pdf (Accessed 11/6/17)
[58] http://download.arridigital.ch/Arri/Glist.pdf (Accessed 11/8/17)

top of the pyramid. What has changed is that the technical range (performance abilities, image quality) between the best gear and consumer gear has shrunk. Today many consumer cameras shoot a 4K image that reads to all but the best-trained eye as close-enough to professional for less than $5,000.

Photograph 3

Arri Alexa digital camera with prime lens, 2017

Reflecting on the analog era, film studios traditionally owned their equipment outright or paid camera manufacturers like Arri and Panavision weekly rental fees in the tens-of-thousands of dollars. Why is this important? In a Marxian reading, control of the means of production by the studio implies—or might guarantee—control of the content created by the filmmakers working for the studio system. The dominant ideology of those with economic and political power (not to mention all-white masculinity), was the perspective presented on screens for mass consumption (See

Marx and Engels, *German Ideology* (1846) and Marx *Capital: Critique of Political Economy* (1867)) In this construct, the studio chiefs are the owners of capital while the actors, directors, and technicians are the laborers. If the laborers did not like dominant ideology of the studio chiefs, their only choice was to walk away.[59]

Film historians including Thompson and Bordwell document multiple instances where directors, actors and other had to leave Hollywood because they could not realize an artistic vision, fought with a studio head or had their work re-edited. Some continued their film careers, but many did not. Essentially this can be understood in terms of confrontation over control between the film artist (the director) and capital (the producer). Critics coined the term *Auteur* about directors who seemed to overcome this dynamic, but even so-called auteurs faced difficulty. Some directors and performers were able to maintain some limited control over their artistic output in some small number of instances, but many paid a significant price for their rebellious individuality. French film critics such as Francois Truffaut used *auteur* to describe directors such as Orson Welles who were apparently able to transcend the studio system by imprinting their films with individual signatures.[60] The critics asserted that, for a small handful of directors, an individual style could be discerned in their movies, even when studios and societal norms or censorship restrained individual expression. Nonetheless, even Welles lost final editing privileges or "final edit" on nearly all his films to the studios after wealthy newspaper magnate William Randolph

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[59] There are, of course, throughout film history alternate production and circulation networks (often low budget). The new era is distinguished by scale and by the parallel development of on-line free digital distribution.

[60] The phrase I coined earlier in this chapter am-auteur is a reference to French critics and freedom in the digital era.

Hearst objected to the content of Welles' first film, *Citizen Kane*. Producers

misunderstood Welles. They failed to recognize the genius in his movies but instead

predicted financial failure. Because of this focus on capital, and perhaps a lack of

artistic vision, producers recut most of Welles's films, inflicting considerable damage

on the product, rendering him an auteur in name only. In the war against the

capitalists, Welles lost. His films were severely damaged before release. Welles

famously wrote a 58-page manifesto in response to the *Touch of Evil* recut.[61] The

story of Welles and *Touch of Evil* is only the best-known illustration of the power

held over this art form by profit-driven producers. This construct of a producer-driven

film market, often at the expense of the director's wishes, provides a tool for

undertaking a chronological examination of several small aspects of American

commercial filmmaking. We will begin during the silent era.

Behind the Velvet Ropes

In the first century of narrative commercial filmmaking was an exclusive club

with centers in Hollywood, Paris, New York, London, Rome, Tokyo, and other world

capitals.[62] Although studio systems existed in France, Germany, Australia, Russia,

India, and China, they were organized differently than the commercially driven

American studios. In addition, cinemas such as those in Italy, Canada, the U.S.S.R.,

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[61] Film editors restored a facsimile of Welles's version of *Touch of Evil* long after his death in 1997 by following his 80-page instructions reverently. We now have something close to the original. It is a brilliant recreation.

[62] 100 years in film history is an awfully long time to compress in a short section, I offer it as counterpoint to set up my argument about the current era in which some control of content and distribution has shifted into the hands of the no-budget DIY filmmaker. I should also note that in this project, I do not examine home movies shot on film or video. I am interested in filmmaking as a narrative artistic and commercial practice. A companion study focused on home movies from the early cinema into the post-DSLR era would be further extension of this research.

and France differed from the American system due to state-funding mechanisms. It was before, during and after World War One that distinct national cinemas arose and that the US film industry grew to overtake other national cinemas in output as war disrupted the once-dominant cinema industries of France and Italy.[63] American cinema remained mostly independent of the government, although many of its behaviors can be read as efforts at self-censorship to keep government out of Hollywood. My study of contemporary DIY digital filmmaking takes place within this context of American commercial filmmaking.[64]

Before I look at the most exciting changes in digital filmmaking from the past decade, I will examine some narrow aspects of the first century of American narrative cinema, starting with films made on actual film (using film cameras) and then moving into the first decade of digital cinema. Film historians Thompson and Bordwell (2010) describe this early period of cinema as proceeding from the recording of lived reality to more sophisticated story-telling technique over two decades. In its first decade, cinema relied "upon the display of action for its novelty value." Later during the nickelodeon era, filmmakers "tested ways of telling stories clearly." In the era leading up to World War One when many national cinemas were disrupted by fighting and war production, some directors increasingly realized that distinctive lighting, set design, and other film techniques could "not only clarify the unfolding of the action but also heighten the film's impact" (53-54). I begin this section with a

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[63] Thompson and Bordwell, *Film History: An Introduction* (2010), covers this period in excellent detail.
[64] Since the 1970's in America there have been well-known independent films and filmmakers working outside of the Hollywood system. Their work showcased in festivals like Sundance, Toronto with budgets in the $1-$10 million range, significantly higher than the budgets for films I study in the post-2010 era. For a more detailed discussion of the Independent Film Movement, see Ortner (2013).

brief historical examination of narrative filmmaking in America and the tools used by American filmmakers, so that I can quickly move to my focus, contemporary no-budget fringe filmmakers who employ "cheap" digital technology.

Early Film Camera Technology, Edison, Pathé and Kodak

Film historians (See Thompson and Bordwell, Allen and Gomery) have documented the development of the first movie cameras by the Lumière brothers and Pathé in France, and the Edison Company in America. In 1887, Edison was awarded patent number US 589168 A for his Kinetographic camera (illustration 1). The movie camera was not the only camera invented and patented in this era. George Eastman patented the first Kodak still camera in 1888. Comparing the patents of the first American-made movie camera and an early still photo Kodak camera (illustration 2), one can question why professionals and individuals universally adopted one, while the other, the movie camera, became primarily an industry tool. As Edison described it, "I have been able to take with a single camera and a tape-film as many as forty-six photographs per second,"[65] He wrote in the application of a target frame rate at 30 frames per second (FPS), the standard still used today in television and most digital media. Interestingly, in his application, Edison employed the phrase "tape-film" to describe the media. As noted in the introduction, tape vs. film became an unbridgeable distinction in the analog era, with film widely seen as being the superior media.[66] Edison's intent in this patent is taking photographs at a rate "sufficiently

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[65] http://pdfpiw.uspto.gov/ (Accessed 10/26/17)
[66] However, in Edison we find a now-ironic conflation of the two: ironic in that today tape and film are often used interchangeably to describe digital filmmaking, a media that uses neither film or tape to record images directly onto memory cards.

high as to result in persistence of vision." In Edison's language, the developed

photographs will, when brought successively into view by an exhibiting apparatus,

reproduce "movements faithfully and naturally."

Illustration 1

Thomas Edison Film Camera Patent Drawing US589168-0
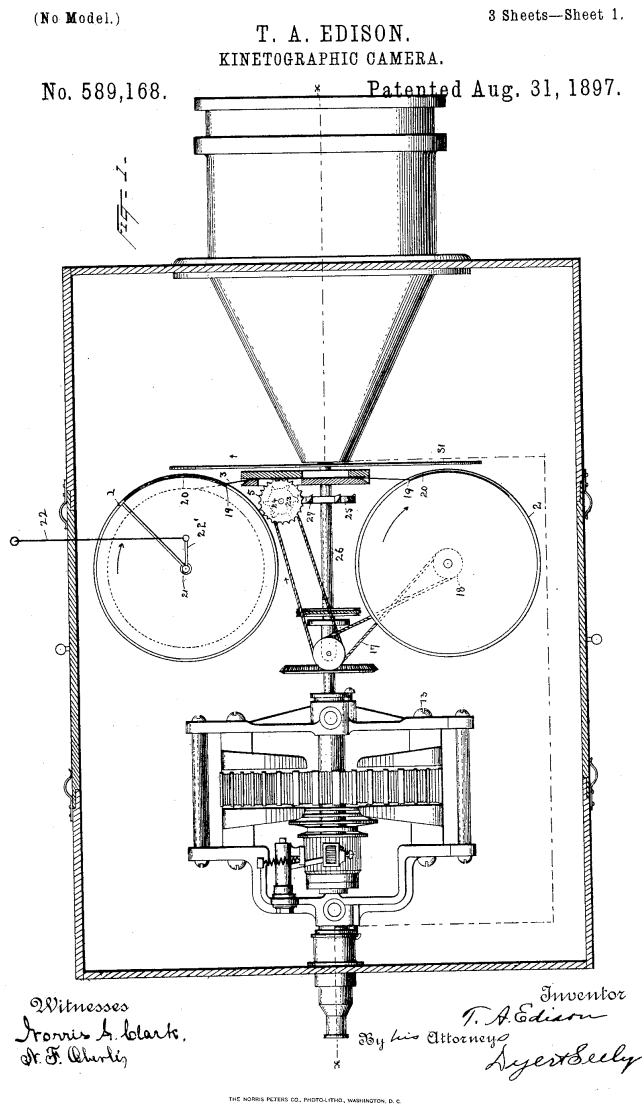
Eastman's so-called Brownie still camera patent: Individual photographers adopted the Eastman Kodak camera widely. They are easily found today in antique shops around the world.

Illustration 2

George Eastman Camera Patent 1888 US388850-1
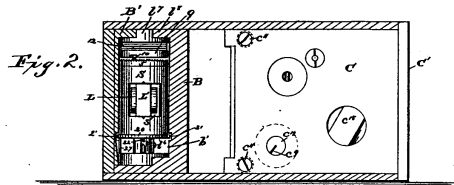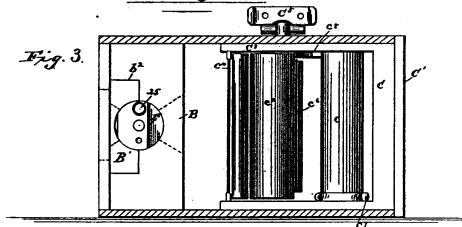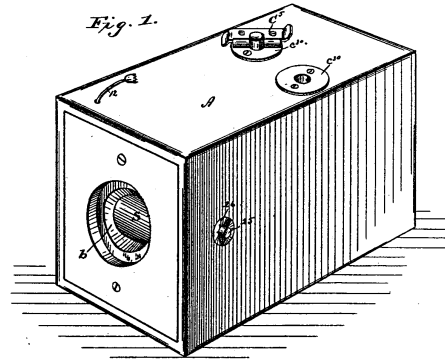
So, why was one camera widely used by consumers while the other was employed primarily by industry? Absent difficulty of use, one could posit that movement in movie cameras creates a liveness lacking in still photographs. The liveness built from bodies in space exploring the world versus still photos that capture only a single movement. Liveness would seem to be preferable in most instances. Therefore, difficulty of use and difficulty of display must be principal factors concerning widespread adoption of the tools. Additionally, there may be a connection between visual display, performativity, and the use of these two devices. Photographs were easy to have processed by the Kodak lab, and once printed, hung on a wall. At the end of the 19th century, film reels, however, required a peephole machine (Kinetoscope) and then a projector (in the 20th century) for display. Hence, it was difficult to set up, expensive, and not worth the effort to most.

The Silent Era in America 1890s–1927

American film in the 1890's began in New York and New Jersey. In France and in Italy parallel film industries emerged at the same time—the European film centers were more developed than in America until 1914 when World War One began (Thompson and Bordwell describe the American film industry of the 1910's as a developed oligopoly and show how post WWI the US film distributors controlled most of the worldwide film market). By 1916, American film screened widely around the world. The earliest films of the 1890's were short, usually under a minute, while the very earliest were 10–15 seconds. Nascent cinema was rarely projected but instead shown on peephole machines with glass viewfinders that a viewer would have to lean into to see a film. By 1896, inventors brought projectors to market first in

France and then in the United States, allowing for public display of movies on a screen including in touring vaudeville performances as a "novelty act."[67] In this same period, just a few years after the invention of the early movie cameras, the first studios formed, including the two largest Pathé in France, and Edison's in New Jersey plus scores of smaller producers in countries around the world. Westward expansion of American cinema began in the early twentieth century. Chicago developed a film industry that in the early 1900s boasted a substantial number of production companies and filmmakers. Further, the Chicago film industry had one of the first vertically integrated producer-distributors that would come to be subsumed by West Coast studios. There are examples as well of black owned production companies and distributors formed in the 1910's including Ebony Films and the William Foster Studio in Chicago. The Norman Film Company in Jacksonville, Florida, the Peter P. Jones Photoplay Company, and the Afro-American Film Company in the Midwest, and the Lincoln Motion Picture Company in Omaha, Nebraska, considered the first all-black movie production company.[68] Hollywood, though, was chosen as an ideal filming location by the bulk of the industry because of the abundant sunlight, varied geographies, and sparse rainfall. It was also a place where unions held little sway over labor, allowing for exploitation of workers, who nonetheless were able to organize in the decades after American film production went West.

Film scholars have shown Hollywood's growth into a horizontally and vertically integrated production and distribution system. This refers to control first of

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[67] Allen and Gomery, 1985, p.19. Further, the first theatrical showing of film occurred on the Rialto, in April 1896, when Koster and Bial's Music Hall presented fourteen Vitascope films in an attempt to buoy their flagging business (Henderson, 164).
[68] http://www.blackpast.org/aah/lincoln-motion-picture-company (Accessed 3/30/18)

the means of production from screenwriting, to on-set with actors, to editing, to printing of the positive film reels for distribution, hence horizontal control of the means of production. This was then married with so-called vertical control of distribution through the building of national and international theatre chains that showcased the output of the specific studio that owned the chain utilizing block booking techniques. This integration of production and distribution into the hands of a few studios blocked outsiders from having their films screened in the theatres.

Photograph 4

Universal Studio lot in California, 1915[69]

Historians describe how that system was able to squash competition by spending elaborately on film budgets and then sending those films to owned theatre networks in the U.S. and on the international market. Thompson and Bordwell describe that Hollywood had two advantages since the mid-1910s: the average production budget "remained higher in Hollywood than anywhere else in the world," and further

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[69] Multiple silent films shoot side-by-side in open-air studio stalls in Hollywood. Source Thompson and Bordwell, 69.

The development of the Hollywood studio system during the 1910s and the

accompanying American takeover of world film markets were among the

most influential changes in cinema history... for better or worse, during this

era, "Hollywood" and "the movies" became almost synonymous for many

audiences around the world (56, 77-78).

Interestingly, this has resonance in the DIY era as digital no-budget filmmakers

struggle to fight goliath. Unable to match resources, they instead have to focus on

difference, making movies that Hollywood will not.

The 1910's show film growing into a developed narrative medium, "the films

of the mid to late 1910s are more like modern movies than they are like the novelty-

oriented short subjects made only a decade or so earlier" (Thompson and Bordwell,

81).[70] In the next decade, the production studios created vertical integration by

acquiring movie theatres that showcased their output. Producers outside of

Hollywood found it difficult to compete with the massive budgets vertical integration

allowed. I read in this a metaphoric connection to today's digital DIY filmmakers

who must confront Hollywood budgets. Thompson and Bordwell describe of the post

WWI film industry:

The U.S. film industry's push into foreign markets during World War I had

given it an enormous economic base for its expansion and consolidation

during the 1920s. Most national film industries were too small to offer any

significant resistance to American domination. Yet the cinema continued to be

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[70] A great deal has been written about how silent film created a universal language of gesture which
made the films easily transferable from country to country with just an easy splice in of new dialog
cards. Talkies destroyed this, and film has struggled with how to do voice overs and captions.

66

an international phenomenon, and many countries managed to make at least a

few films of their own. Some countries in Europe were strong enough to

support national industries and even to consider banding together to challenge

American power. Moreover, for the first time, filmmakers in several countries

were creating short experimental films that challenged the classical narrative

approach of Hollywood cinema." (181)

With a few changes to nouns, this could be tweaked to describe contemporary digital

producers.

This first period of silent cinema lasted until 1927, at which point films with

synchronized sound began production in the U.S. and Germany. Synch sound became

possible when production companies figured out a means of playing images and

sounds from a single projector. Edison had attempted to distribute film with sound on

a companion wax recording, but this proved too cumbersome for projection (see

Allen/Gomery, 1985). This silent era from 1890 to 1927 had produced artists such as

Charlie Chaplin in Hollywood, Sergei Eisenstein in Russia, Georges Méliès in

France, and F. W. Murnau in Germany.[71] It was a period of artistic experimentation

and the construction of a worldwide film studio system. It was also a period of

phenomenal artistic innovation, rooted in the growing capabilities of the burgeoning

technology. In many ways, the early silent era parallels the current digital SLR era in

that a new medium was suddenly thrown open to creative experimentation and

explosive growth.

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[71] For a more thorough examination of early cinema please see, Kristin Thompson and David
Bordwell, *Film History: An Introduction*.

As that medium matured, industry created a stranglehold on output. Vertically integrated film companies combined production, distribution, and exhibition. This three-tiered vertical integration "guaranteed" that a studio's films would find screens in communities around the US and internationally. "The bigger the theater chain owned by the firm, the wider its films' exposure would be" (Thompson and Bordwell, 157). The first nationally significant vertical integration of a studio with a theatre chain occurred in 1925 when Famous Players-Lasky merged with Chicago-based Balaban & Katz. The firm became Paramount-Publix then Paramount Pictures. By the early 1930s, Paramount owned 1210 theaters in the U.S., plus some abroad. Other Los Angeles based distribution companies grew alongside Paramount in this maturing oligopoly. The smaller, but still significant companies, those called the "Little Five" by Thompson and Bordwell were: Universal, Fox, the Producers Distributing Corporation, the Film Booking Office, and Warner Bros (158-9).

> While the Big Three controlled first-run theaters, the Little Five and the numerous small independent production firms aimed many films primarily at neighborhood and small-town theaters. Moreover, even the big studios occasionally made films that went against the grain. (171)

Interestingly, this oligopoly did not control the majority of theatres around the country, but did control distribution at many theatres, nonetheless.

Hollywood's Golden Era of Control

After 1916 and into the so-called Golden Era of the 1930s, Hollywood was producing a majority of films shown worldwide. Film scholars posit a correlation

between budgets and control: "budgets grew as Hollywood consolidated its international control, and major directors found themselves able to make expensive films" (Thompson and Bordwell, 161). During this period, Wall Street found Hollywood.

> "During the mid-1920s, Wall Street investment increased the ability of the Hollywood studios to produce big-budget films. Epic films followed the trend initiated by *The Ten Commandments*, with colossal sets and lavish costume design." (169)

One can assert that big budget not only defines the Hollywood style, it created that style.

Independent producers worked outside of the studio system, but they held significantly less cultural and financial capital than the film industry's institutional powers. The early system was exclusive; studio chiefs held unchecked power, giving them the ability to build teams of actors, directors, and technicians to produce what in many cases became classic films. A small group of people created, controlled, and profited from the industry of American film.[72] Studio chiefs were also able to blacklist so-called subversives, rescind final editing privileges from filmmakers, and pressure or exploit individual actors and technicians.[73] In the studio system, individuals had to be "discovered" as talent, sanctioned by the studios, and signed to

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[72] Control was not absolute but was significant, United Artists was an early independent distributor created in 1919 by Charlie Chaplin, Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks and director D.W. Griffith in response to studio hegemony.

[73] John Howard Lawson is an example of someone labeled a 'subversive' by the HUAC committee (The House Committee on Un-American Activities) and subsequently blacklisted by Hollywood studios. The HUAC committee terminated his career. Lawson, an excellent screenwriter was powerless to protect his reputation, and despite his success—and the publication of his remarkable book, *Theory and Technique of Playwriting*—he has been virtually forgotten by history. Lawson can be seen here testifying before HUAC: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nJzV6-wJ3SQ

69

contracts. Individuals not sanctioned and not named star, writer, or producer could not perform those jobs—they were excluded. This stands in stark contrast to the current period where nearly anyone can declare himself or herself a filmmaker and take their work to the marketplace. The breaking down of the barriers to entry, the dismantling of exclusivity, the democratization of the medium, is a hallmark of the current era and the most significant appeal of DSLR cinema. However, in Hollywood's Golden Era, such dismantling of control would have been unimaginable.

One of the more lasting legacies of the Golden Era is the self-censorship mechanism put in place by Hollywood studios to keep Washington interference in check. In 1922, the main studios banded together to create the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA), run by Will Hays, then Postmaster General under Warren Harding. Hays pressured producers to eliminate offensive content from their films, and to include morals clauses in studio contracts. By 1924, the MPPDA had implemented guidelines that would render censorship laws unnecessary. Hays stiffened the censorship guidelines in 1927 and 1930, finally implementing a strict Production Code in 1934.

Hollywood after the Golden Era

Throughout the twentieth century, nearly all studio films were market-oriented, and tended to reflect the politics of the producers and corporations backing the projects. *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956, Dir, Don Siegel), for example, included a none-to-subtle excoriation of Communism built subtextually into the narrative. Subversion in film was unusual, mostly as a factor of money. When in the 1960's and 1970's the counterculture was profitable films could be seen as bending to

the market. Films like *Dog Day Afternoon* (1975, Dir. Sidney Lumet), and *Midnight Cowboy* (1969, Dir. John Schlesinger) embrace difference as a commodity, but in both instances the so-called deviant behavior is punished in the narrative by death. By the 1970's some filmmakers, such as John Cassavetes and Nichols Roeg, were challenging corporate hegemony. Yet the studios, which owned Roeg's content, screenplays, films, and ultimately, his creative output, oversaw even someone like Roeg, who imprinted his style in significant ways by including countercultural elements in the narrative or by casting rock stars in lead roles. Big industry owned all media. Certainly, today big industry still owns big media, cable television, film studios and the lines that bring digital media into our homes, but production has in countless ways broken free of corporate control.

When the industry worked as designed by the studios, the films were often hugely profitable. Profitability, or Box Office used to gauge a film's success. Some films, for example *The Godfather* (1972) or *Star Wars* (1977), were both cinematic masterpieces and financial juggernauts. Other financially successful films like *Crocodile Dundee* (1986), or *Dragonslayer* (1981) were not as high quality in terms of acting, editing, directing, or storytelling. Profitability was often the most commonly used measurement of success, although it was certainly not the only measurement; the Academy Awards, film festival premieres, and critical reviews all had an impact on the reception of commercial films. Box-office receipts, however, influenced that reception. Films were big business, and the audiences knew it. Examples of "successful" filmmaking over years have included *Top Gun* from 1986, which generated roughly $330 million in profit, and *Birth of a Nation* from 1915,

which generated approximately $5 million in profit in non-inflation adjusted dollars

($122 million in 2018 dollars). Both films, however, are deeply flawed. *Top Gun* can

be read as vapid and sexist, and *Birth of a Nation* as shamefully racist.[74] Film scholars

Thompson and Bordwell write of *Birth of a Nation*, "This bigoted account of African-

Americans' role in southern history aroused great controversy when it was released,

but it was enormously successful and influential for its dynamic and original style."[75]

Both *Birth of a Nation,* and *Top Gun* were competent technical works, and the most

profitable films in the year of their release, but both had social messages that many

critics find disagreeable.

Table 2

Selection of Top Grossing Films by Calendar Year

Top Grossing Film	Year
The Covered Wagon	1923
Song of the South	1939
Rear Window	1954
Billy Jack	1971
Rocky	1975
Independence Day	1996
Toy Story 3	2010
Rogue One: A Star Wars Story	2016

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[74] *Birth of a Nation*, credited with the early use of parallel editing where two stories unfold simultaneously on screen, is particularly troubling because it is part of the cinema studies canon. I, however, do not show the film in my classroom. It is an intractable problem.
[75] *Film History: An Introduction*, 2009, 74.

This chart contains a mix of the good, the bad, and the ugly. Films loved by fans and critics, and others that do not look as good in hindsight populate the list.[76] *Song of the South* (1946), like *Birth of a Nation*, reflects American institutionalized racism, while *Rear Window,* 1954's biggest box office draw, is universally beloved. The American Film Institute ranks that film as the 47th best American-made movie of all time.[77] The only conclusion to be drawn is that a correlation between box-office and movie quality is somewhat—if not completely—random. In other words, profit does not always mean quality. In the current era, we have an alternative to profit-driven film.

Movie Camera Evolution 1957

A patent application by Paradise De Rosa dated April 1957 asserted that it was necessary for one to purchase "a camera, projector, and viewer as completely separate items, at a rather substantial expense." De Rosa patented a combined film camera-projector, meaning that consumers could more efficiently show their movies. This was a crucial step forward in ease of use—in the ability to perform Filmmaker— but this was not a professional-level tool, meaning that filmmaking could be seen as two-tier: real movies and home movies, with real movies being shot on bigger format and hence higher resolution stock. The patent highlights both the ease of use and lower price: "the overall cost of [the camera] will be little or no greater than that

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[76] You can see the full lists sorted by year and by decade: http://www.filmsite.org/boxoffice2.html (Accessed 11/13/17)
[77] http://www.filmsite.org/afi100filmsA.html (Accessed 11/13/17)

involved in the purchase of any one of the three types of devices described, thereby providing a highly desirable multi-purpose item of camera equipment."[78]

Illustration 3

Combined Movie Camera, Viewer and Projector Patent, 1957
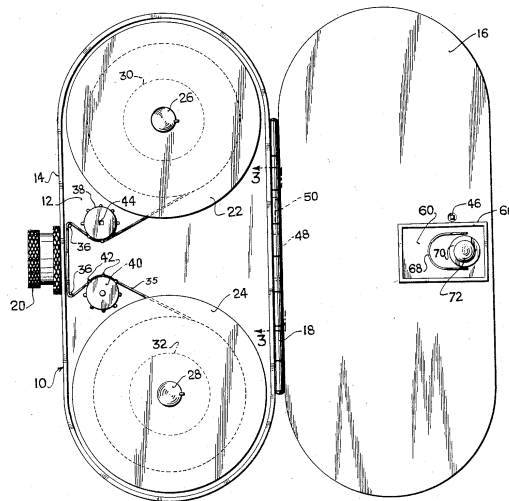
Fig.1.

INVENTOR.
PARADISE DE ROSE
BY
ATTORNEY

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[78] https://www.google.com/patents/US2883904 (Accessed 10/27/17)

Consumer movie cameras continued to evolve, becoming smaller and more portable, battery operated, and simpler to use. Professional cameras also became smaller to a degree while advancing in image quality, and soon were able to deliver beautiful pictures on large format film. Cinerama Scope, 70MM, IMAX, and Panavision are examples of this trajectory. Home movie formats, such as Super 8 read as amateur when juxtaposed against the larger film formats, as more surface area in the larger format film rendered a better-projected image that was richer, more saturated, and more detailed.

Experimental Filmmakers

Experimental filmmakers in the analogue era worked outside the system, making movies for culturally elite audiences. Maya Deren, Stan Brakhage, and even Andy Warhol worked in experimental film. Typically, they recorded on stock smaller than studio formats. They shot 8mm, 16mm, 28mm, in black and white, and usually without synch sound. Many of these films used reversal film stock rather than negative because it was cheaper. Reversal film produces a positive image on a transparent base instead of negatives and prints. 35MM slides, Polaroids, and home movies typically used this technique: a negative while in the camera, processed to become the positive film print, and then projected from the in-camera stock. No stand-alone negative print created. This contrasted with the methods of Hollywood studios, which typically processed and archived a negative, with additional positive prints made from the negative for theatrical distribution. Amateur films shot using the reversal technique began to deteriorate immediately, and as a result, many have been lost. Archivist

Karen Glynn labels these movies "orphan films."[79] The creators are long dead, and their lineage is often unclear, they are simply pieces of orphaned film sitting in an archive. They worked with little or no money, employed an amateur cast and crew, and labored to learn their craft outside of the system. They are significant as the forbearers of today's digital filmmakers. By working outside of the professional system on smaller film formats they created a construct that inspires today's outsiders.

Those surveyed for this study know the films of the great experimental filmmakers of the past. More than one female film director working in DIY cinema has mentioned Maya Deren at film festival screenings, at the bars after screenings, or to me in conversation. More than one of the students surveyed in Chapter 2 reference her work, most likely because they watched Deren's *Meshes of the Afternoon* in one or more cinema studies courses. As a film student in the 1980's-90's, I was shown her work by more than one professor. So, these filmmakers—Deren, Brakhage, Warhol— are the ideological forefathers (foremothers) of the revolution. They draw inspiration from their ability to transcend the system at a time when the system ran nearly the whole film industry in America.

High 8 Cameras – Home Movies Embrace Non-Professional Aesthetics

As a film student, I shot movies on a High-8 home movie camera that was battery powered (illustration 4). It felt like a kid's toy. In contrast, today, students shooting 4K can feel like pros. Patent Number US3469906A dated September 30, 1969 shows a camera nearly identical to the one I used as a film student.

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[79] https://www.copyright.gov/orphan/comments/OW0632-Glynn.pdf (Accessed 10/13/17)

Illustration 4

Small battery Powered 8mm film camera for home use, 1969 patent

Fig.1

Fig.2
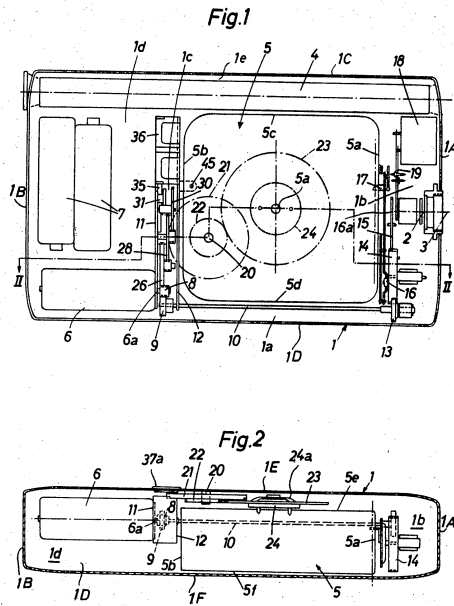
INVENTORS

BY   ALFRED WINKLER
            RICHARD DENK

Michael J. Striker
      N.H. ,

Structurally like ones used by film students and home movie enthusiasts from the
1970's through the 1980's, it was simple to use, employing a film stock much smaller
than professional film: the media once developed was spliced together using razors
and clear tape, a nod to film industry practice. Nevertheless, the final projected
images read as student movie or home movie in all ways. This construct defined

77

student and amateur filmmaking in the analog century. It changed with the advent of digital, starting with a patent granted in 1996, just 21 years ago.

SLR and Video Wedded into a Single Machine – A revolution Being Made

Patent US5493353A is a revolutionary document. Granted on February 20, 1996, it draws out blueprints for a Single Lens Reflex (SLR) camera that can switch between analog still film and digital video modes by means of a "manual switch." The patent calls for use of a CCD microchip as recording media. This chip is lower resolution than the CMOS chip built into Canon and Nikon DSLR's in 2009, but we can view this as a vital transitional step toward the DSLR revolution. The patent claims that "almost all" image sensors used in digital video and digital camera applications were one of two types of solid-state semiconductor: the charge-coupled device (CCD) or the metal-oxide semiconductor (MOS). "The CCD appears to be the chip of choice for most manufacturers." [80] The discussion of microchip technology in the patent is fascinating:

> Up to the present moment in time, the high-resolution image sensors being manufactured have been too expensive to consider for application in a type of camera that would combine video and still-film operation. However, available manufacturing and marketing data indicates that shortly these limitations will no longer apply.

We see a reference to MOS (Later CMOS) chips as being higher resolution, but too expensive for broad use. By 2009, thanks to Moore's Law, those chips had grown in

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[80] https://www.google.com/patents/US5493353 (Accessed 10/30/17)

capacity while dropping in price.[81] Today, nearly every digital camera built uses a

CMOS chip, and the CCD has been relegated to history (much like Super 8 analog

film). When listing the specifics of this construction, Article One in the patent states

that the "objects and advantages" of the invention are "Dual operation. The camera

user can carry and use a single camera." This last phrase could be read as not

important when observed in the current era. Everyone today has a dual use camera.

When this patent application was written, no one had one. That is what makes it

vitally important.

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[81] Definition of Moore's Law: "Moore's Law is a computing term which originated around 1970; the simplified version of this law states that processor speeds, or overall processing power for computers will double every two years." http://www.mooreslaw.org/ (accessed 4/8/18)

Illustration 5

Patent for camera that prefigured the DSLR, 1996

FIG. 1
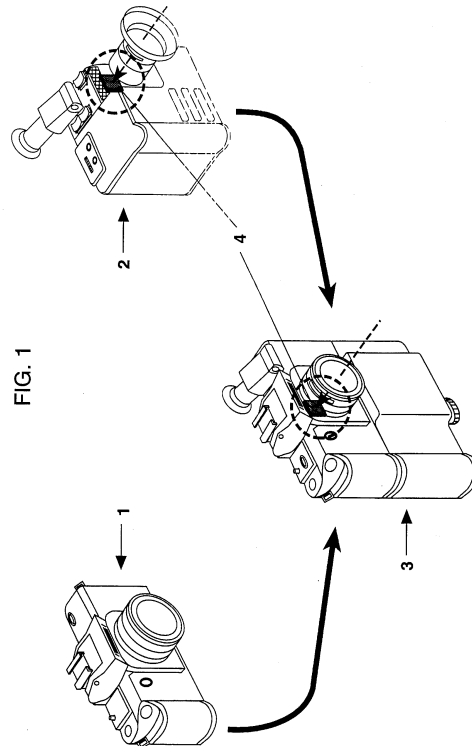
The mechanism that allowed for the switch between analog and digital in a single

camera body was revolutionary (illustration 6 below).

Illustration 6

Manual Switch in Hybrid Analog/Digital SLR, 1996 Patent

FIG. 10
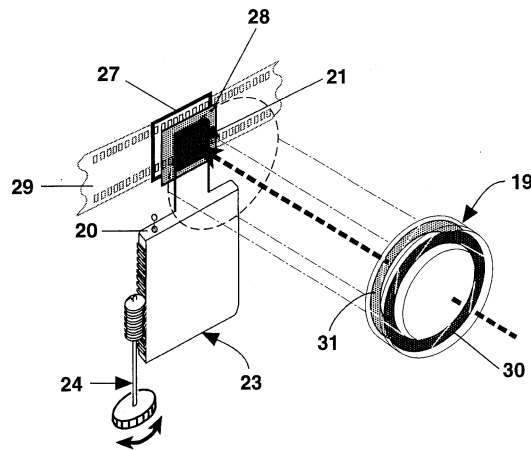
The switch is clunky, no doubt, but the idea is revolutionary. This diagram can be

read as an historically significant defining metaphor—but not the exact tool—that

two decades later would allow *am-auteurs* (portmanteau of amateur and auteur) to

shoot like pros, forever altering filmmaking and the cinema community. It is a

somewhat clunky mechanism that would never be built into consumer cameras, but it

can be read as the tool that triggered the revolution (at least the fist trigger with the

CMOS chip being the second). As a filmmaker I am personally inspired by this diagram, because I see in it the near-future; Snapchat postings where an unaware teen can simply switch between still and video without second thought, DSLR movies and freedom from studio control. But, this revolutionary alteration could not have happened without scientific breakthroughs in recording media, specifically the advances in chip technology addressed below.

Digital Movies – 1990s and Beyond

In the current era, films are still big business, even when a film is shot and distributed digitally. *Avatar*, *Gravity*, and *Star Wars, Episode One* are examples of digital "films" made with huge pools of capital, and which generated even larger pools of profit. In the analogue era, massive teams of well-paid professionals produced films. The film set was hierarchical and patriarchal with a producer and director (predominantly white males) at the head of the production. The producer was responsible for all aspects of film financing, including the hiring and firing of the director, production costs, and distribution returns on the investment. The director, in turn, oversaw the team that made the artistic decisions per the financial constraints set by the producer. The actors and musicians performed for the camera. Technicians recorded the performance onto film stock and audiotape.

In the late 1990s, George Lucas introduced an all-digital *Star Wars* reboot. The *Star Wars* prequels were digitally shot and, in some cases, digitally distributed. Lucas wanted movie theaters to buy new projection equipment to show *Star Wars Episode One*. Theaters were permitted, however, to opt out of the digital projection and screen copies on film using a traditional 35mm analog projector. In this case,

producers converted the digital movie back to analog film stock for those theaters unable or unwilling to invest in the emerging technology. By 2004, *The Economist* put the cost of switching over from analog to digital projection for a single theater at $100,000; nonetheless, they projected that by 2005, which they described as a "tipping point," there would be 2,000 digital cinemas worldwide.[82] My research places that tipping point later in the decade with the evolution of the low-cost CMOS chip, but in either case, a few years is a brief period considering the magnitude of the evolution. *The Economist* offered a quick rundown of the costs of a major movie shot on analog vs. digital:

> Making a movie with film can be hundreds of times more expensive than with digital videotape. Shooting multiple takes gobbles up film, and the film must be processed before it can be viewed. By contrast, digital tape can be edited on the spot and used again and again. The producers of *Attack of the Clones* reckon they spent $16,000 on 220 hours of digital tape; if they had used the same amount of film, it would have cost them $1.8m. Moreover, in the traditional world of film there are other costs to add to the bill: each print of a film costs $1,500—and it deteriorates with scratches and dirt every time it is run through a cinema's projector. With the average movie now costing over $90m to make and market, it is little wonder that the Hollywood studios are so often risk-averse, preferring sequels and copycat films to anything truly original.

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[82] http://www.economist.com/node/3372697 (Accessed 11/13/17)

Big-budget digital film was a costly endeavor, involving huge capital and huge box-office receipts, the opposite of the kind of fringe filmmaking that I study. Yet the format advocated by Lucas encouraged a rethinking of film, both ontologically and aesthetically, that opened the door for the blurring of categories between film, video, digital, and analog. This blurring ultimately paid dividends for fringe digital filmmakers as it became possible to *conceive* of professional filmmaking shot on digital cameras. When Lucas directed his digital *Star Wars* reboot, professional-quality digital cameras were extremely expensive and hence only used by Hollywood institutions. Over the next decades, however, these digital cameras became cheaper and better, so that today, a near-Hollywood quality camera can be purchased online for a thousand dollars or less.

In 2000, George Lucas worked with Sony to develop the Sony HDW-F900 digital camera. It was HD, 1920x1080. Lucas had intended to use the camera to shoot *Star Wars Episode II: Attack of the Clones* (2002), but instead it was first used by director Robert Rodriguez in *Once Upon a Time in Mexico* (2003). Blog Premium Beat wrote, "this camera showed that digital had a long way to go before surpassing the quality of film," but it also showed that digital was at least "potentially viable in the future."[83] Sony labeled this format Cine-Alta, and in marketing materials asserted that the camera was being embraced by the most prestigious producers, directors, and cinematographers "from around the world." [84] Today it is a dinosaur. It sells on

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[83] https://www.premiumbeat.com/blog/important-cameras-cinematic-history/ (Accessed 11/6/17)
[84] http://www.pro.sony.eu/pro/lang/en/eu/attachment/1237485155882 (Accessed 11/6/17)

EBAY for $999,[85] and the phone in most people's pocket has a faster processor and more sensitive chip. Still, when screening *Once Upon a Time in Mexico,* I perceive the big brother to today's DIY little brothers. It is a beautiful movie shot digitally, using expensive cinematic lenses, Hollywood skill sets, and professional technicians. But, like the movies at current no-budget film festivals, it was shot with a microprocessor. Rodriguez's *Once Upon a Time in Mexico* and Shom Das's *Hopscotch* share this common digital DNA.

Widespread Adoption of the CMOS Chip – A Revolution Realized

Patent applications for image sensor processing, including the CMOS chip are of profound importance. In this dry detail are the beginnings of countless films freed from institutional, studio and bank control. Here is where the amateur can dream of near-professional filmmaking on an tiny budget. The great films of our era will be shot on CMOS chips. Sure, there will be a couple of *Star Wars* films on the list, or one or two $100,000,000 masterpieces. However, my research tells me that many great films of the current era are waiting to be discovered by fringe film festival juries, waiting to be posted to Amazon Prime, vying for their moment in history. The CMOS chip makes this argument viable.

Patent application WO1999030269A1 dated June 17, 1999 and titled "Single chip symbology reader with smart sensor," identifies an integrated system and method for "reading image data." In the application, an optical scanner records images, stores data, and/or decodes optical information in memory, including "one

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[85] https://www.ebay.com/itm/Sony-HDW-F900-CineAlta-24P-HDCAM-Camcorder-Unit-1-of-3-3012/162592604955 (Accessed 11/6/17)

and two dimensional symbologies, at variable depth of field, featuring 'on chip' intelligent sensor . . . and logic."[86] The sensor in this application is attached to a printed circuit board. It is more computer-like than previous image capturing media, and represents an ontological shift from film stock—which writes an entire image at once in silver nitrate and other chemicals—to the recording of individual pixels. This sensor reads codes in two dimensional space, a significant distinction from images used in analog filmmaking. Patent application EP1146559A1 dated December 30, 2000, eighteen-months later, puts that conceived computer into a camera. "The CMOS camera includes: an image sensor formed on the integrated circuit and a USB controller and transceiver formed on the same integrated circuit."[87] The application includes a hand-drawn sensor array that can be read as a precursor to the CMOS "Full-Frame" configuration used in DSLR cameras. The full-frame CMOS sensors arrange every pixel in an array from top to bottom, and side to side, so that the recorded image field exactly equates pixel-by-pixel with the real world. There is no compression or division of colors in this array; the world captured digitally appears "as is," and from this array, it is recorded to memory. Lack of compression and holistic representation of the world by the pixel is the real magic of the CMOS sensor.

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[86] https://www.google.com/patents/WO1999030269A1 (Accessed, 10/30/17)
[87] https://www.google.com/patents/EP1146559A1 (Accessed, 10/30/17)

Illustration 7

Hand Drawn Image Sensor from patent application EP1146559 A1
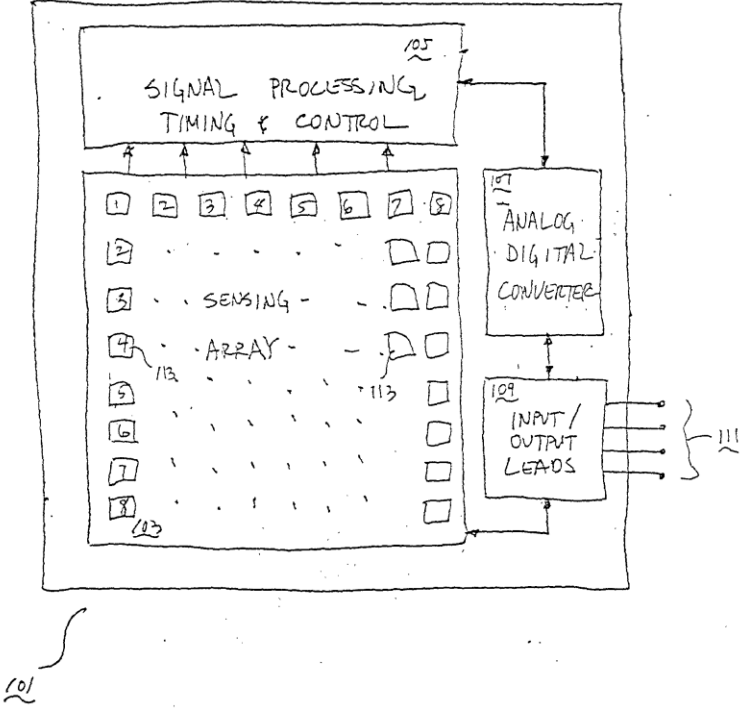
FIGURE 2

Video cameras before the DSLR had integrated high-quality microphones and

a unibody construction that made it easy to "run and gun." They could cost $60,000

for a professional rig and shot on videotape. Lam writes that DSLR audio "is perhaps

the single biggest limitation of shooting video with the cameras." Further, he implies

that the audio is good only for home movies, drawing a distinction between the

personal and the professional, noting that "for a professional shoot, the audio is

unacceptable" (Lam, 38). In other words, while the video captured by the early DSLR cameras was professional, the audio was amateur at best.

Before this period, video cameras used CCD sensors as opposed to CMOS sensors Fox (2010) and others chronicled the sensors used in the new camera technology as early as 2010. The CCD was cheaper, smaller, and had lower resolution. The best had an array of three that recorded light after its division into primary colors by a prism. Before 2010, a 3CCD camera was the state of the art camera for low-budget documentary and narrative filmmakers.[88] The CMOS sensor, shaped to match the size of a 35mm frame of film, eliminated the prism and the division of colors. Any pixel in the image was conveyed as-is by the sensor to the recording media. Intended for still cameras, this sensor is what triggered the revolution.[89]

Below is an advertisement for a DSLR camera with a full-frame CMOS sensor, the Canon 5D, Mk III. You can see the full sensor in Photograph 4; it fills the entire space behind the mechanically-flipped SLR mirror. The sensor was designed from the shape of an analog 35mm film frame, perhaps as a nod to lifelong photographers making the move from analog to digital. In this image we see engineering bending to the photography market, perhaps unconcerned or even unaware of filmmakers who would create a revolution from this tool.

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[88] Check your attic; you may have a now-antique 3CCD camera purchased in 2001-2010. I do.
[89] David Fox, "HD DSLRs: The film look on a budget", *TVB Europe*. May2010, p10-14.

Photograph 5

Canon 5D, Mk III with Full Frame CMOS Sensor[90]

This is a magnificant machine, a filmmaker can challenge Hollywood hegemony one image at atime, movie after movie for the lifetime of this camera. Having examined the evolution of the tool that freed filmmakers from mechanisms of control within the studio system, I next present narrow aspects of that system as it evolved to embrace digital technology as the DSLR upended the traditional big-budget filmmaking process.

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[90] https://www.usa.canon.com/internet/wcm/connect/us/ddda7034-019d-4945-8b51-3f6d6e0163db/eos5dmarkiii_bfront_hiRes.jpg?MOD=AJPERES&CONVERT_TO=url&CACHEID=ROOTWORKSPACE.Z18_P1KGHJ01L85180AUEPQQJ53034-ddda7034-019d-4945-8b51-3f6d6e0163db-kVgikuM (Accessed 10/30/17)

The DSLR Revolution

The Digital Single Lens Reflex (DSLR) camera further upended the
filmmaking market. A recent innovation in camera technology, the DSLR became
standard in fringe filmmaking after 2009 when both Canon and Nikon stumbled onto
chip technology that created a *$100,000* image in a $1,000 camera. In the technology
section above, I outlined how changes in the CMOS camera chip technology created a
new way of making film—and, importantly, a new way of conceiving cinema as an
artistic product. For the very first time since film had been divorced from film stock,
no-budget or outsider filmmakers with DSLR digital video cameras could make
cheap movies that truly looked "filmic." This democratization of high-quality image
making was a watershed moment in the history of film, allowing filmmakers outside
of Hollywood control an opportunity to make film instead of video for the first time.

I use the phrase "stumbled onto" because Canon and Nikon marketed these
cameras primarily to still photographers, not filmmakers. The manufacturers installed
10-minute limiters on video files so as not to clog memory cards, and they did not
have essential audio meters that every filmmaker needs regardless of budget.
Filmmakers worldwide noticed this inadvertent creation of a cheap highly effective
"film" camera, precipitating a sudden and unexpected revolution in the art form. This
revolution occurred simultaneously with the widespread adoption of the Flip Camera
in 2010. At this time, the Flip seemed to be the next big thing. It had a small body,
not much larger than a cell phone, and a retractable USB jack. It shot an HD image
that easily transferred without cables to a laptop for editing. It had no external lenses,
so it fit into a pocket. In the filmmaking classes I taught in 2011 the Flip was the main

camera we used. It was cool, new. In actuality, it was the thing before the next big

thing, Cisco purchased Flip in 2009 for $590 Million, but killed it just two years later

in 2011 just as we were implementing it as a tool campus-wide.[91] Soon everyone used

the DSLR and no one shot on a Flip, which had mostly been relegated to file cabinets.

Why did the outsider film community reject one technology and embrace another?

Both the Flip and the DSLR were HD, and one—the Flip—was much simpler to use.

The answer, of course, lies in the near-professional image quality of the DSLR. The

DSLR has the further advantage of being usable with multiple lenses, including older

analog SLR lenses that amateur filmmakers might pick up in thrift stores for a

fraction of their original cost. These cameras with interchangeable lenses, and high-

quality CMOS sensors, triggered the revolution despite their many built-in design

flaws (bad microphones, time limiters), a more difficult workflow, and despite the

massive Flip marketing campaign and early adoption.[92] Digital film students wanted

to work with a near-professional tool. They saw themselves in a specific category, the

flip simply didn't fit that narrative. It was too much of a toy, not enough of a tool, and

so filmmakers rejected the flip camera despite hype and a nearly $600-Millon dollar

investment from one of technology's core companies.

    Digital filmmakers saw the ability of DSLR images to compress the space

between professional and amateur filmmaking, and therefore, all the limitations of the

DSLR camera were put aside. Mainstream cinema is big business, but movies created

on consumer grade video cameras typically are not. DSLR films are shot on memory

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[91] https://www.cnet.com/news/why-cisco-killed-the-flip-mini-camcorder/ (Accessed 2/4/18)
[92] Anecdotally, my university has at least a few-hundred Flip Cameras sitting in a storage cabinet, mostly unused since 2011.

cards rather than videotape (a subtle distinction, admittedly), are very cheap to make, and rarely turn a profit. However, they are imbued with significant social capital. DSLR video was as cheap to make as home video but approached the aesthetic quality of film—a space that outsider no-budget filmmakers had rarely been able to occupy before.

Video enthusiasts, journalists, and researchers chronicled the DSLR revolution as the changes have occurred since 2008. Greg Lam, an executive with the British Columbia Professional Videographers Association published an analysis of the DSLR image in 2010.[93] He addressed the video-capability of DSLR cameras versus traditional video cameras, emphasizing that DSLR achieves a very shallow depth of field, sometimes referred to as depth of focus.[94] This is a measurement between the in-focus and out-of-focus components of an image. Seemingly not important to a casual filmgoer, it is of utmost importance to a director working in cheap digital cinema.[95] Analog film stock achieves a shallow depth of field that has come to have meaning. Filmmakers deem it authentic; the audience judges it "real" cinema. Video, unlike film, traditionally offered a very deep depth of field.[96] In the traditional construct, that videotape image, common in home video, television news, and low budget films—including pornography—has less inherent beauty than the

---

[93] Greg Lam, "Switching from Video Cameras to DSLRs", *EventDV*, Nov2010, Vol. 23 Issue 9, 36-43
[94] Cinema Studies scholars will find an interesting irony here. The deep-focus photography work of Greg Toland in *Citizen Kane* is revered, and yet by the analog video era, deep focus came to be seen as non-filmic, an unfortunate aesthetic problem to be overcome in low budget cinema.
[95] See the glossary for a more detailed description of depth of field and see Chapter 5's section on audience analysis where I unpack survey data regarding the response to digital images among the responses to Survey 4.
[96] Think of TV news footage of the Tiananmen Square standoff on CNN in 1989, in which the protesters and the tanks are all in focus in the image; this is deep focus news imaging.

analog image. The DSLR camera upended these distinctions by offering low budget filmmakers a shallow depth of field in a cheap camera.

Depth of field has an interesting history, Thompson and Bordwell describe cinema before 1919 as having "a hard edged, sharp focus look." Some filmmakers in the late 1910's and early 1920's began to place gauzy fabrics and filters in front of their lenses to create "soft, blurry images." Further:

> Special lenses could keep the foreground action in focus while making the background less distinct. This technique enhanced the classical narrative style by concentrating the spectator's attention on the main action while deemphasizing less important elements. The result of such techniques was the soft style of cinematography. This style derived from still photography, and especially the Pictorialist school pioneered by such photographers as Alfred Stieglitz and Edward Steichen early in the century. (176)

The wedding scene in *Greed* is an example of this technique. It was filmed through a textured scrim placed in front of the lens. In my experience working in television news, we often rubbed Vaseline on the lens cover when taping the stand-up of a well known but older journalist to minimize wrinkles. This softness was associated with Hollywood glamor. Orson Welles famously shed soft focus in *Citizen Kane* because he wanted to employ multiple planes of storytelling in a single image. Nonetheless, by the DSLR era soft focus came to be seen as a tool of big budget cinematography, while deep focus was seen as the domain of the low-budget video producer.

The DSLR has significant limitations, but image quality supersedes those shortcomings. Greg Lam also chronicled the limitations of these cameras in 2010,

writing of DSLR's "limited record time" for event coverage, and lack of an

"electronic viewfinder (EVF)". These cameras record audio badly. Many of my

informant filmmakers found the audio from DSLR cameras to be unusable. They had

to overdub audio tracks, record actors from a different device, invent rigs to act as

duct-taped together workarounds.

> The good news is that DSLRs are different when you think in terms of the
>
> looks they create versus traditional video cameras. The bad news is that when
>
> you take the DSLR plunge and start shooting moving pictures with cameras
>
> built for stills, you'll have new issues to worry about that were solved long
>
> ago on video cameras (Lam, 36).

Fox writes further:

> One of the most exciting developments of the past year, for those whose
>
> ambition is larger than their budget, has been the introduction of HD DSLR
>
> cameras that offer large sensors and a huge range of lenses for less than the
>
> price of a [conventional video camera]. (Fox, 10)

Fox chronicled a professional cinematographer who called the cameras a "game

changer" and credited "low budget filmmakers" with "being the first" to see the

potential—with Hollywood following their lead. He published from the Video Expo

in London, a trade show, in February 2010 where he found it "notable that about half

of all the cameras on show were HD DSLRs, noting that in "the previous year [2009]

there had only been one (on the Canon stand)." This period 2009-2010 marks the

beginning of the phenomenon. Today in 2018, we are near the end, as most

photographers are replacing the DSLR with cameras called "mirrorless DSLR" (The

mirror in the mechanism actually defines the SLR. The removal of that mirror eliminates the SLR function, rendering the term "Mirrorless DSLR" as meaningless, an error that should be corrected with time). For this reason, the revolution that I study can be marked as occurring between 2009 and sometime in the very near future—we are not yet able to identify that date—when digital film cameras will no longer employ the SLR mechanism. The trend of cheaper sensors in better cameras will no doubt continue.

To conclude this chapter, it is appropriate to ask, "so what?" This revolution is best captured in three images, (photographs 5-7 below). The first, Photograph 5, from *Chinatown* (1974) shot on film, the second a frame grab from CNN (1989) shot on video tape, and the third from a DSLR (2015). The important distinction is the depth of field, as mentioned earlier in this section. *Chinatown* looks as a "traditional" film should; Faye Dunaway is in perfect focus and is well lit. The background fades away so that our eyes fall to her face, and our focus remains on her character and story. Narrative film traditionally employs shallow focus to guide the audience through the story arc. Film achieves shallow focus well. Analog videotape, however, does not. CNN's video from 1989 shows a very deep depth—the man, the tanks, the street in both foreground and background all share a field of focus—that is deemed important for news gathering (although bad for narrative cinema). This is one of the most important images of the twentieth century, and it will retain historical significance into the foreseeable future. Nevertheless, it is not appropriate for narrative film. It is video, television; hence, from the shared perspective of traditional narrative film

aesthetics, it simply does not look like a movie. The third image, Photo 5, from a low-end DSLR in 2015, shows an aesthetic quality closer to film than to video tape.

Photograph 6

Faye Dunaway in Chinatown (1974)[97]

Photograph 7

CNN Video in Tiananmen Square (1989)[98]

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[98] http://edition.cnn.com/videos/world/2013/06/03/vault-1989-tiananmen-square-man-vs-tank.cnn/video/playlists/atv-moments-in-history/ accessed 1/5/17. This is a frame grab from a live television broadcast from Tiananmen Square in China. The important distinction here is that this image is the kind that was available to low-budget filmmakers before the DSLR. In spite of its historical significance, this is simply is not what no-budget filmmakers want their movies to look like. Before the DSLR, there was little choice available.

Photograph 8

DSLR Video (2015)[99]

It is noteworthy that in the third picture above, the DSLR camera is a low-cost model

accessible to filmmakers with a camera budget under $1,000.[100] When I was making

no-budget documentary film between 2010 and 2015, I used an earlier iteration of this

camera, the Canon T3i. In my experience, this technology produces a $100,000 image

in a $1,000 camera.

Having explored evolving technologies, I will consider my use of the term

revolution in describing this latest tool. Specifically, asking why I call this sensor

revolutionary, but not for example the 1957 home movie camera/projector, or the

small hand-held 8-mm analogue film camera, or the Flip, that had all of filmmaking

---

[99] This video was shot on a relatively inexpensive Canon, T5i, a student level DSLR camera that costs approximately $600 for the camera body plus another $400 for lenses, batteries, and accessories. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PA8N_5j0wwo accessed 1/15/17

[100] I am not trying to be glib; I understand that $1,000 is still a lot of money in many parts of the world.

thinking of the digital future in 2011. I can justify using the term revolutionary

because of how the DSLR camera was employed around the world at a time when

film festivals were proliferating in nearly every city on earth, and digital movie sites

like Vimeo and YouTube were experiencing astronomical growth. I credit the camera

because I saw my informants, my friends, and I working in a style that read as newly

freed from institutional control. For the first time in my professional career (now 30+

years), I did not have to go to a powerful network, a bank or a studio to make my

projects. I did not have to run my script past executives, or supervisors, or producers

more interested in cash flow than in my artistic output. I felt like I was participating

in a revolution, freed from control. When I got to film festivals, screened the work of

other artists freed from institutional control, I discovered a worldwide community of

peers. Their shared experiences are chronicled in the festival section of this

document. First though I will explore workflows of Millennial filmmakers in Chapter

2, and of older Generation X filmmakers in Chapter 3.

Chapter 2: Millennial Filmmakers and the Director's Dilemma, Digital Natives Unmoored from Tradition

Millennial or digital-native filmmakers have a work technique that is distinct from older artists. Younger filmmakers work inside of social networks with friends to make films to a more significant degree than older directors do. What does this mean, and why is it significant? I identify a distinction from older film directors (Generation X) who tend to build work communities from a project outward, rarely involving friends or family from their social lives in their professional endeavors. Work inside social networks vs. work outside these networks is a key generational distinction among filmmakers, specifically my informants under 30 years-old mention friends and family across their production workflow surveys, while filmmakers over 40 do not seem to use social networks to the same degree.

Digital Natives have had digital technology, computers, video games, and the internet available for the bulk of their lives. Demographers William Straus and Neil Howe[101] named the Millennials as born 1982–2004, while others select a different date range. What is clear, though, and of more importance to this study, is that these filmmakers are at the beginning of their careers. They had little or no experience working with *film* as traditionally understood during the analogue era (i.e. film as the medium itself). Most work in digital video as if film and digital are the same. What is most interesting at the onset is that so-called digital natives view the art form

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[101] Strauss, William; Howe, Neil (2000). *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation.* Cartoons by R.J. Matson. New York, NY: Vintage Original. Strauss, William; Howe, Neil (1991). *Generations: The History of America's Future*, 1584 to 2069. Harper Perennial.

differently than filmmakers in my age and peer groups—professionals with established, and more traditional, media careers. Millennials have the skill sets, and they are freed from notions of how film used to be made in the analog past.

Digital film students are:

1) Changing the definition of amateur filmmaker—many own gear and are thus able to make movies with complete control of the means of production;

2) Aspirational—many hope to work as professional filmmakers, TV producers, advertisers, and they are;

3) Self-financing—many hope to work inside of financial/capital structures later in their careers. They pay for their student film work out of pocket.

Some of these findings are not surprising. Student filmmakers have long been aspirational. It is a field of study that attracts dreamers. What is new and interesting is that many of the survey informants own the means of production, allowing them to develop free from traditional financial constraints.

The respondents have been playing at digital technology throughout their lives. As students already comfortable with film gear, they are jumping "feet first" into digital video and then learning "film" technique later. This is a new phenomenon with the advent of the digital era. Most students in the analogue era simply did not have the tools to play at professional filmmaking.

Cheryl Brown, et al. (2015) assert a correlation between changing technological boundaries and student participation, arguing specifically that as digital technologies become easier to access students employ the tools more completely. They assert that "with no direct financial costs to end-users' access, new

opportunities have opened up for all students including those from developing

countries to engage online."[102] The correlation between no-cost and playful

participation is key. The digital space is fun, low cost, and available to nearly all

Millennial age filmmakers in this research. McIntire (2014) notes that nearly

universal access to technology deemphasizes "have and have not," making primary

"can and can-not."[103]

Millennials have been using digital tools their whole lives, hence the phrasing

"digital native," they show real skill in application from initial use. Baby Boomers

and Generation X'ers could ride a bike at age 5; Millennials are inside editing digital

video at that same age. Miller and Washington (2005)[104] describe Generation Y (The

Millennials) as possessing a lifestyle that "integrates every form of media

imaginable." Further, they "rewrite the rules" with an assumed agency. Generation X

before them "defied" the rules but did not attempt to control the process (454). This

manifests when considering a perceived general ease of adoption digital natives find

when using new tools and new software for the first time. There is a fluidity to the

workflow. Wasson and Grieveson (2008) suggest the study of cinema was born in

conjunction with "social turbulence" in the twentieth century. This was a mission-

driven discipline rooted in social upheaval.[105] My Millennial generation informants

write often of filmmaking with a mission; they desire to be socially connected

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[102] Brown, Cheryl, Czerniewicz, Laura, Noakes, Travis, "Online content creation: looking at students' social media practices through a Connected Learning lens." *Learning, Media & Technology*, Mar2016, Vol. 41 Issue 1, p140-159. 20p. (accessed 2/21/17). Further, *Noise Uprising* by Michael Denning might provide avenues for research into uses of new technology by students in cinema.

[103] McIntyre, S. D., "Reducing the Digital Literacy Divide Through Disruptive Innovation." *Higher Education Research and Development*, 1(July 2014): 83–106.

[104] Miller, Richard K., and Kelli D. Washington. "Chapter 52: GENERATION Y." *In Entertainment, Media & Advertising Market Research Handbook*, 454-457. Richard K. Miller & Associates, 2005.

[105] "Making Cinema Knowable," *Inventing Cinema Studies*, Duke University Press, 2008

(appendix 5). These are filmmakers looking to construct a new type of filmmaking while they also apprentice to Hollywood. They seem to want a foot in both worlds.

Over a period of two years, I shared the survey link with approximately 250 digital filmmaking students at the University of Maryland. I received 52 anonymous surveys back from these filmmakers between June 2014 and September 2015 (see Appendix 2 for Survey Questions). Most of the respondents were third and fourth year undergraduates in 300/400 level courses—these are the students who received the link.

The chapter structure is as follows. I divide the observations into five sub-categories:

1) Millennial filmmaking and social networks,

2) Film training and DIY practice,

3) Metamodernism,

4) On-set behaviors,

5) Professionalism and funding.

Millennial generation artists tend to work in media worlds that are less hierarchal and less vertically controlled. They possess a freedom from institutional control that was not possible before the internet disrupted art production and distribution. Linda Weintraub (2003) wrote of art that is "totally inclusive: anything is possible, and everybody can play." She marveled that when everyone can play, anyone "can be a rebel, even the traditionalist."[106] Everyone can play is an important framing narrative.

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[106] Linda Weintraub, *The Making: Creative Options for Contemporary Art* (Distributed Art Publishers, 2003) for further discussion see, Paul Krainak, "Post-Millennial Culture: New books on art in the twenty-first century" *Art Papers* 28 no2 14-16 Mr/Ap 2004

We are witnessing the construction of a creative culture where lack of stature does not disqualify one from entering the digital marketplace. Stature helps to form a receptive response, but anyone's work can become "viral" at any time.

While a VP with Sony Television, David Mumford (2006) wrote of the Millennial Generation and explained that Millennials use media differently than the generations who proceeded them in two fundamental ways. First, he argues, they are "simply different" in the way they relate to family and friends, their relationships are differently mediated by technology. Second, they are more "passionate about their electronic devices." Mumford describes Millennials as "time-shifting, place-shifting and even producing their own content" in digital space.[107] Time has proven Miller prescient. An individual member of the Millennial generation may not be more technically skilled than a 1930's ham radio operator from the Baby Boom generation, or a 1970's model rocketeer from Generation X, but the scale of Millennial adoption of technologies is noteworthy. In 2006, when he wrote, YouTube was less than two years old, today it is ubiquitous, and one of the most trafficked web sites on the planet.

This adoption of technology points to ease of use instead of some level of technical wizardry, and that is the point. Hoffmann, Ivcevic, and Brackett (2016, 149-150) deconstruct this fluidity, finding that the early academic training of many Millennials emphasized digital creativity. For them, "digital creativity provides an appealing means of self-expression." Further, most Millennials have "grown up with technology at their fingertips and their facility with technology enables them to

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[107] Mumford, David E. "Make a Connection with Tech-Savvy Millennials." *Television Week*, November 2006 (accessed January 18, 2017).

embrace it." [108] In research conducted with high-school age Millennials, Hoffman et. al found that 91% of students under 18 years old had made a video for class, 75% created a multimedia project, 70% had made a podcast. Other creative behaviors were less frequent. For example, 14% said they created content for a video game. In this age community, this type of work is a regular part of students' academic lives.

Before profiling a few of the individual informants, I will offer one additional frame, one that limits the ability to categorize individual artists demographically. For while there are certain trends noticeable across generational lines, even more may be gleaned by examining specific workflow statements from individual artists. Foreman-Wernet, Dervin, and Funk (2014) write that demography only predicts "cultural-political-economic factors." Social scientists can track content choices but not "interpretive sense-makings." In other words, we can track how groups work, but not what that works means without examining the specific sign systems. Because of this, these scholars advocate two kinds of "understandings" of their subjects. The first is demographic; the second is narrative, focusing on how informants make sense of their work within "their own interpretive horizons."[109] The following pages braid the quantitative survey data with the qualitative narrative component.

Evolving digital imaging technologies have given amateur producers the opportunity to make nearly professional quality film images at a very low cost. After sorting through the quantitative narratives from 35 Millennial filmmakers along with

[108] Hoffmann, Jessica, Zorana Ivcevic, and Marc Brackett. "Creativity in the Age of Technology: Measuring the Digital Creativity of Millennials." *Creativity Research Journal* 28, no. 2 (April 2016): 149-153.
[109] Foreman-Wernet, Lois, Brenda Dervin, and Clayton Funk. "Standing in Two Worlds Looking at an Art Exhibition: Sense-Making in the Millennial Generation." *Journal of Arts Management, Law & Society* 44, no. 2 (April 2014): 101-117.

the 52 quantitative surveys, I was struck by the number of times digital-natives referenced their friends and families in making their films. In contrast, I am Generation X filmmaker have never made a film, television show, or digital media clip with a friend or family member. In my experience, these two worlds are distinct. This was a surprise finding and one I find compelling. Friends have cameras, bands, and stories that inspire their work. These filmmakers work within communities not professionally focused, but more social in nature. They draw their work from social communities; they make media with their friends, with and for their digital connections. Snapchat for this group is not a means of advertising work in another environment, but instead a space where the work is conceived and performed; it is a self-contained unit. This is distinct from older media producers, Generation X or Baby Boomers, who have built their networks outward from their professional work. To be clearer, older producers found a job first in media, worked there and then built a social network from that professional environment. These professionals have distinct established social communities in parallel to professional networks joined from organizations where they make media. Traditionally, the work comes first, and the social environment second. Millennials have upended that process to some degree. For older producers, there is a distinction between their professional and social connections. Younger producers have not yet built their expertise-based networks, but they can work in a nearly professional manner nonetheless. It is as if the two communities across this generational divide are working in opposite directions: Millennials from within the social network, others outside or in parallel with the social network. For one group the network is at the center, for the other the

work is central. Younger producers have not yet established credentials—titles such as Producer—but are doing these jobs nonetheless.

Digital media has allowed for professional-level work without the credentialing process, the guaranteed paycheck, or the social stature. Millennials, in other words, are producing without the label because they have never been paid professionals. Some do the work as an apprenticeship or in training for established media jobs in Hollywood, New York, D.C. Some, though, are not interested in an apprenticeship. Many work to build certified skills, others are out simply for the skills free from credentialing, some do it just for fun. Some post playful movies to social media, while some hope for real YouTube success. In Generation X, the training process was very different, a producer was not a Producer until named and paid by a media organization.

I first asked the student filmmakers about their experience working in screenwriting, directing and digital filmmaking. 53% of the respondents answered that they were first-time filmmakers, while 30% described themselves as experienced filmmakers. Of the 52 student respondents, 22 offered a more detailed feedback of their experience (table 3 below):

Table 3

Student Filmmaker Experience (Quantitative Survey #1)

What best describes your experience as a digital filmmaker?

Answered: 52   Skipped: 0

Answer Choices		Responses	
I'm a first-time filmmaker trying to learn how to setup a camera		53.85%	28
I'm an expericenced filmmaker looking to develop my skill set		30.77%	16
If you have ever made a film or written a screenplay? Please describe your experience:	Responses	42.31%	22
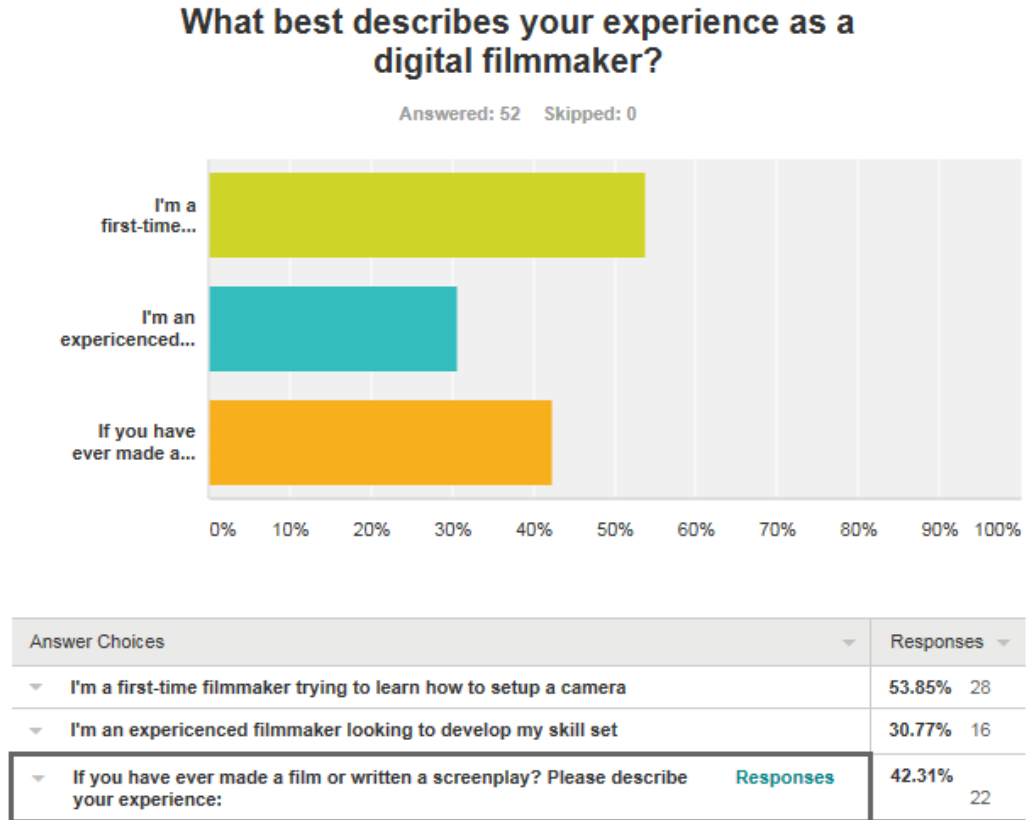
David and Connors (2007) argue that micro-budget films even before the DSLR revolution were "no longer" restricted in "narrative and aesthetic ambitions" because advances in digital production and post-production technology allowed a disconnect between cash and aesthetics. In the decade after David and Connors, this effect filtered down to student filmmakers as cameras improved and costs plummeted. David and Connors noted that in the no-budget range "there is no significant relationship between budget and box-office performance. Films that have succeeded

in this category were those with good stories."[110] I catalogue comments below. From these surveys, I can discern a new type of filmmaking process coming into being. Employing Caldwell, I attempt to read meaning from production practices as well as the texts. The student respondents answered:

> As a junior in his third year in achieving his B.A. in Media and Communications, I've written everything from skits to short-films to TV shows to movies … I write on paper first then move on to the typing process. There is something about the free-form that offers a higher sense of satisfaction. 1/30/2015 12:47 AM [111]

Dov Simens (2010) describes a low budget filmmaking model that employs both a shorter screenplay length and digital cameras, "electronic cameras and high definition video (HDV) cameras from recognized manufactures."[112] This was adopted fully during the years of this research project.

> The first time I made a short film was at my previous community college and the entire process was chaotic. I was given a camera and told to go out and shoot an abstract film. First, I had no idea what an abstract film was, and second, I didn't even know how to work the camera. 6/3/2014 6:11 PM

The primary takeaway is that the personal is blended into the professional with little distinction. This is made more evident when considering the role social media plays in the work process of Millennial filmmakers.

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[110] Arvind Ethan David, Rachel Connors, "Writing for low-budget movies: I am big. It's the pictures that got small", *ScriptWriter*. May2007, Issue 34, p60-62. 3p. (Accessed 2/22/17)
[111] All surveys were anonymous per my IRB approval, so I am including the time stamp as a means of demarcating comments.
[112]   Dov Simens, "Top 10 No-Budget Secrets," *MovieMaker*, Spring2010, Vol. 17 Issue 86, p70-72. 3p. (Accessed 2/22/17)

Filmmaking and Social Networks

I collected many examples of digital natives who made films from within a social network. Filmmaker K[113] wrote of using Mom's camera and getting help from a friend. She explained, "I borrowed my mom's camera, rented out a tripod, and got a friend to come with me to help with the shooting." In addition, she stated, "I thought all hope was lost until my friend told me that her friends from college were playing a gig in DC on the weekend." Friends of friends helping friends—an application of the social network, indeed. We can see in the research other examples of the blending of relationships within production workflows. Filmmaker Q used her boyfriend's camera to make her movie, and "the equipment is called a canon EOS 70D." This is a good camera; it is cheap by traditional film standards but records a nearly professional image. This filmmaker also relied on her boyfriend to teach her how to use the camera: "He had to help me with how the camera works so that I don't call him like 50 times a day."

Filmmaker AA made a film about Ju-Jitsu with his brother. Filmmaker DD, like others in this study, also made a personal film. It is fair to ask why this kind of cinema is distinct from home moves shot in previous eras on 16mm film cameras. There are compelling parallels. Katz (1999) chronicled how in the early-20th Century technology used to record music transformed the music itself, with function dictating or influencing form to a great degree.[114] There is a parallel here to filmmaking, which has undergone a transformation due to its technology. The ubiquity of the high-

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[113] Per my arrangement with the IRB Board I am not making the names public. Please see Appendix 4 for the text of statements from the individual filmmakers.
[114] Mark Katz, *The Phonograph Effect: The Influence of Recording on Listener, Performer, Composer, 1900-1940,* The University of Michigan Press, 1999

quality digital camera allows the capture of the everyday, and in the process, film as a medium transforms into something often more life-like, if sometimes duller, than film in earlier eras.

Finally, one last example to complete this line of discussion. Filmmaker W made a video about traffic in Washington, D.C. This personal chronicling of the mundane was rarely produced in the analogue era, the work of Andy Warhol being a noteworthy exception. This workflow was too expensive, the audience too small in the past. Dialogues around self-representation and careful editing of our public lives were suppressed by the sheer dollars needed to shoot and develop analog film. Today, fast and immediate production and free digital distribution means these avenues are open, filmmaker W is responding to this new tradition. There are examples of very early silent movies that showed street scenes in New York, San Francisco, and Paris to audiences that would most likely never be able to visit one or the locations. These were films more about the novelty of the new medium than they were about recording a non-dramatic aspect of a person's day such as the daily commute. This filmmaker sought to exhibit "the anxiety and frustration" of his daily drive—highly relatable, but not great cinema. He wrote in his passage, "Viva la road rage!"

In addition to making films in familiar spaces with familiar people and gear, these filmmakers are making very personal projects. Filmmaker N chose a location she knew intimately, her hangout at "Ali Baba hookah café." This filmmaker started without a great deal of formal training, stating it was "the first time I shot using a professional film camera." Like other digital filmmakers, she was experimenting and learning on the fly. Importantly, she was doing so in a social space that she found

111

both familiar and friendly. Filmmaker P also chose a well-known and comfortable location to shoot, her family restaurant. It was "the same exact restaurant that I grew up in and spent majority of my lifetime playing, eating, napping, doing homework, and everything else any kid would do at home." Using such locations, of course, distinguishes digital filmmaking from the film industry's established professional work process. In professional media, aesthetic considerations dictate location leases; there is even an entire subset of producer called a location scout, whose professional task is to locate the places that offer conditions conducive to a successful production, including correct lighting, clean audio, and evocative background. It is rare that location scouts would choose their family restaurant for a scene, as that crossing of lines between the personal and professional would be frowned-upon. In non-professional production, these sorts of constructs and rules just do not exist.

Informant A is a stand-up comedian who made a documentary short about a comedy troupe based in Washington, D.C. She wrote that she knew a documentary should be "personal, interesting and entertaining." She expressed frustration with technical limitations—specifically, her inability to edit and use cameras—but relied on her team of friends to help learn the skillset. Another informant, I, loves food. That is evident from her excerpt, where she wrote, "I decided to create a film about food. I love nothing more than food and everything that surrounds it. I enjoy absolutely everything about food and the joy it brings to everyone around me."[115] In this era, love and not commerce can guide a project; in eras past, commerce had to be the dominant consideration. Some artists in the past worked free from commercial

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[115] See Appendix 4

112

considerations, certainly; but what distinguishes the current era is, once again, scale. So much work is free from financial constraints in this period that the volume itself is noteworthy. Today, many artists are unshackled to a significant extent (or entirely) from companies and investors. This freeing of the film artist, writer, director, and actor from financial considerations allows filmmakers to prioritize the personal and the artform over commerce, potentially enabling the creating of worthwhile works of film art.

Filmmaker E wrote of making a film from an intensely personal source: a poem. This is the kind of film made frequently in the no-budget era. This filmmaker wrote of basing the film on "a poem I wrote I couple of weeks ago." Like previous filmmakers in this study, he had a friend to help. He wanted to borrow gear and was excited because it would "increase the production value of the film." In eras past, experimental filmmakers like Maya Deren or Stan Brakhage made excellent films from or inspired by poems, but such artists were a determined minority. Today, with the financial stakes lowered, this type of filmmaking is a simple choice for the filmmaker rather than a brave career choice. One could argue that today's filmmakers are prioritizing quantity of over quality, unlike some of the risk-taking filmmakers of the past. My feeling, however, is that great digital media is being made in the current period. I see it especially in the film festivals I chronicle in Chapter 4.

Informant Y made a film about graffiti artists in Baltimore, created in an experimental style inspired by Maya Deren. This filmmaker wrote:

I realized that the most appealing topic to me was street art... I figured it would be a great opportunity to film somebody first hand performing the act

of graffiti. I came to the conclusion that not only would filming my friend be a great and interesting topic... but it would also be a way to inspire him and actually take his passion to the streets.

She drew from her social network, which included other graffiti artists. She saw her film as a means of inspiration within that group. In the era of reality TV and digital surveillance of nearly everything, these filmmakers represent the elevation of the personal into publicly consumed art. This is not an art form practiced by a cultural elite within powerful institutions. Rather, it is practiced nearly everywhere, by people we know, and about topics we have lived.

These artists might be hoping to build a bridge from the personal to the professional. Informant U is, like the others, working within his social network, but he dreams of using filmmaking to achieve relevance outside of that network. He aspires to make music videos for well-known musicians. He wrote, "Today I am meeting with my friend who is a rapper. He is very talented and has shot multiple music videos before." Informant X also made a music video from inside her social network: She realized her "friend, Neal, was in the band called Drop Electric." So, she asked if she could make a video, and "he was very excited about it." Neal saw the potential of video to expand his audience while the informant dreamed of working in the music video business. The mundane, the personal, the social network are the hallmark of this movement, with digital cameras everyone can be Andy Warhol, the filmmaker.

I asked questions concerning the tools of production used to make movies. This is important since in the past, access to "professional" gear was often what

114

separated the authentic filmmaker from the student filmmaker. When I was a film

student, as mentioned earlier, we made our movies in High 8 black and white silent

film, while professionals worked in 16mm or 35mm film stock—primarily color with

synched sound.

I attempted to tease-out whether students owned their own gear, thereby controlling

the means of production. When I surveyed why they purchased/or did not purchase

gear I received 35 written responses.[116] More than two-thirds of these respondents

own their camera and exactly half owned an editing system (table 4). This is an

important finding. When contrasted with the condition described above for previous

generations of film students, we see filmmakers with greater control of their work

output. In owning their own gear these students can claim status in a way that

previous generations of student filmmakers would have found difficult, or impossible.

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[116] Appendix 9

Table 4

Student ownership of filmmaking gear

Do you own your own gear?
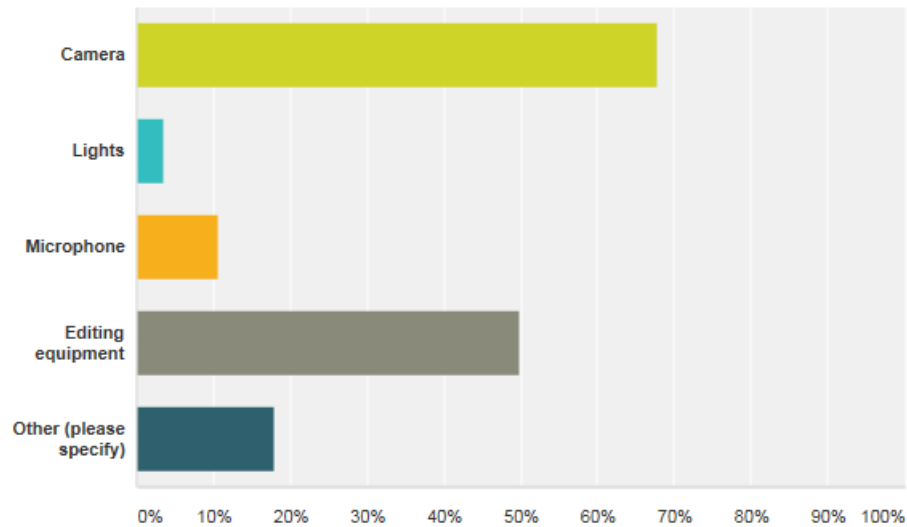
Answer Choices	Responses	
Camera	67.86%	19
Lights	3.57%	1
Microphone	10.71%	3
Editing equipment	50.00%	14
Other (please specify)	17.86%	5
Total Respondents: 28		

Tondeur, et., al (2011) studied the relationship between socio-economic status, cultural capital, and access to digital electronics, and found among their secondary-school age informants in Flanders, Belgium little correlation between lack of wealth and access to computer technology. In the years since this study, computer technology has continued to develop (as anticipated by Moore's Law) so that in the current period many people around the world carry a sophisticated 4K camera in their

pocket.[117] This nearly universal access to functional equipment influences the answers, aspirations, and production possibilities of DIY filmmakers.[118] They hope to "work as a freelance videographer and to produce [their] own content." They use "financial aid" and invest in gear from money earned in summer jobs. They own Mac Book Pro's, DSLR's lenses, software.

> I invested in my own gear since I am interested in photography. Otherwise, most of the other equipment is very expensive. 9/5/2014 3:27 PM

> Access, however, is still not universal, as expressed by one informant who answered honestly when asked about investments in gear: "I haven't because I am poor." Owning gear is a badge of status in this community. Students buy cameras, it seems, to make a statement about their place in filmmaking. They also seem to want to master their own gear.

Film Training and DIY Work Process

I next asked students what they hoped to learn by taking film courses. Considering that so many own their own cameras, took film production in high school or have already made YouTube videos I wanted to target what added value film training could offer to the digital-native student. In general, students are looking for entree into the film profession. Many of these students are not satisfied making videos from their own skill set. They want professional credentials. This is not surprising.

Aquila (2015) discusses film school as a tool for counterbalancing societal barriers faced by outsiders, specifically women working in the Australian film

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[117] Jo Tondeur, et, al, "ICT as cultural capital: The relationship between socioeconomic status and the computer-use profile of young people," *New Media & Society*, Feb2011, Vol. 13 Issue 1, p151-168.
[118] In two industrialized Western economies—Flanders in the 2011 study, the United States in this one.

industry.[119] He notes that Australia boasts one of the higher rates of participation of women in the film industry, crediting training programs. Kelly and Robson (2014) assert that participation of women in the film industry is contingent upon support for training and production subsidies.[120] Students in these surveys seem to express similar feelings. I received forty-one responses to this question.[121] Students express a hope to "plan shoots in a more professional setting and learn how to conduct interviews in a better way." This is not a technical skill but a performative one. They hope to learn how to form a professional identity through their training. Further, one offered, "I hope to learn techniques that I can use to give my work a professional look." Others expressed desire to learn professionalism to land a job in the film industry.

> I wish to learn how it's done in the professional world. After graduating this
> semester, I would like to find a job that involves filmmaking and
> communication in general. 9/5/2014 1:05 PM

Additionally:

> I hope to learn how to be a better storyteller. I also hope to learn how to
> connect with the audience better. And I hope to learn filmmaking techniques
> that will be helpful in attracting audience attention. 6/3/2014 5:59 PM

These statements indicate that film training is still perceived as a pathway to the film profession as expressed by current students. The revolution in filmmaking has not changed this fact.

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[119] Pieter Aquila, "The value of film school in the success of female filmmakers in Australia," Studies in Australasian Cinema. Jun2015, Vol. 9 Issue 2, p140-151. 12p.
[120] Kelly and Robson, *Celluloid Ceiling: Women Film Directors Breaking Through*, edited by Gabrielle Kelly and Cheryl Robson, 9–18. London: Supernova, 12
[121] See Appendix 7.

The above examples show new filmmakers learning on set, in the edit suite. Informant HH utilized one of the most common training resources available to new filmmakers, digital documentary itself:

> I think that this was the first time in a long time, where I spent hours on the internet, searching for useful videos, tutorials, and systematic diagrams on how to create a documentary film using Adobe Premier Pro.

Filmmaker II expresses the frustration of working while learning. He was not certain about the right technical or artistic choices and had to hope for the best.

> I purchased an SD card. It was the most stressful moment during production. It's only worsened by the fact that the SD card I have is unlike any other, which is more stressful because I don't know how it functions.

Despite these unorthodox workflows, where every filmmaker pursues a unique or even path, many of the filmmakers envision filmmaking as a profession. The professional world prizes predictability, process, efficiency, and repeatability. Some of the filmmakers profiled in this research will develop in that direction, while others will never join professional filmmaking but will continue to make digital media in their unique way. Informant J, for example, presents a more studied approach to filmmaking. This film student sees himself as being in dialogue with great commercial filmmakers.

> I have been doing Photography for about 6 years until I discover[ed] the magic of filmmaking. I have always enjoyed watching films ever since I was a kid, and as teen, I started to appreciate the art that goes into making a great

film, I look up to directors such as Spike Jonze, Wes Anderson, Spike Lee and Akira Kurosawa.

In a sense, filmmaking has become more like writing a novel in that there are now few barriers to entry; virtually anyone can endeavor to write. Some will succeed, while others will shift direction. To a greater degree than in the past filmmakers can chart their own path in this same way. An author needs a laptop and a vision; a filmmaker needs a camera, a laptop, and a vision. When I was a film student in the 1980-90s, I could only dream of access to the gear used by professionals. I shot my early films on black and white Super 8 film stock, using a now-antique home-movie camera. My projections into the world of professional filmmaking were imagination and ambition because I did not have the means to make professional-quality images on a student's budget.

Two filmmakers, S and T, articulate both the advantages and disadvantages of working on a non-professional film set. Informant S confronted the problem that bedevils many no-budget filmmakers, namely, the difficulty of motivating participation:

> The biggest issue I faced while making this music video was that the first person I was going to make a music video for told me he was going out of town two days before we were supposed to begin shooting.

This forced a complete change in the subject, the film and the process:

> Once I had searched for someone else to film, I had found out that my friend's father had a band... I went to their studio, shot them until 2am, edited my footage… Two days later, their agencies [Sic.] legal department contacted me

120

and told me that they were using that footage for their website and that I could

not use that footage until after their website was finished.

After shooting, the subject of the film claimed ownership of the material shot. This is

not unique. Without contracts, lawyers, or resources, this filmmaker was compelled to

shelve their project. Another producer might have been able to get the legal

permission necessary, but this producer could not bypass a power imbalance when

working alone. That lack of power allows for potential abuse, as this filmmaker

discovered.

Filmmaker T set out to shoot a comedy with serious political implications.

This is not the type of comedy typically made by Hollywood: "The movie is about a

young black man who is hated by everyone for no particular reason." This informant

is not concerned about the film market; he is making a movie that expresses identity

in a digital space able to accommodate this statement. He, like other informants in

this research, can consistently disregard questions about box office, revenue and

budget that define commercial filmmaking. This is the revolution in the making.

In this section, digital native informants framed their work in their own words.

They are often first-time filmmakers working within their social networks to confront

production problems, acquire equipment and technical skill, develop vision, and

absorb rapid changes in technology. I discovered three things. Digital native film

producers are less concerned about revenue.[122] They make their films for a specific

audience but do not expect payment for the work. These informants play with form.

The freeing from the market allows creativity in approach. And, they are not hesitant

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[122] This could be a factor of age, or their status as students.

121

to express individual identity in their films. In the next sections, I shift to additional

framing and further analysis of the surveys conducted in the research project. These

surveys offer further insight into this distinct community within digital filmmaking.[123]

Metamodernism

One of the most interesting and popular genres of Millennial video production

is the tongue-in-cheek recut of YouTube videos by fans. Survey respondents engage

in this activity and write about it in the qualitative survey responses (appendix 5).

These fan videos are enormously popular and show a widespread technical fluidity.

They are flip, quirky and do not take themselves too seriously, but underlying that

style can often be seen a sincere tribute to the band or celebrity that is the focus of the

recut. This interplay between snarky and sincere, quirky and technically fluid is a

hallmark of these videos. Before proceeding more deeply into analysis, I can offer

further theoretical framing beginning with the concept of metamodernism coined by

Timotheus Vermulen and Robin van den Akker in their essay "Notes on

Metamodernism" (2010). In the essay, they reference an oscillation between the poles

of irony and sincerity in contemporary cultural contexts. Vermulen and Akker

describe "The New Sincerity" as "someone temporarily [suspending] irony" to

convey as much truth as possible. "To be sincere, at least today, is not a natural

quality but a choice."[124] I apply this frame freely, stretching it to include embodied

and digital spaces, earnestness, irony, and online postings. This helps to understand

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[123] I present the audience survey more fully in Chapter 5.

[124] See Robin van den Akker and Timotheus Vermulen, "Notes on Metamodernism," *Journal of Aesthetics and Culture*, Vol. 2. Coaction Publishing. 2010. Pages 5-6, and Vermulen, Timotheus. "Timotheus Vermulen Talks to Cher Potter." *Tank Magazine*, Issue 7 Volume 4. Spring 2012.

and place into context the level of play Millennials bring to on-line postings. Older filmmakers engage in tribute (shows like *Behind the Music*, films like *The Last Waltz*) but not in play to such a significant degree. This renders the work more personal, allowing the filmmaker to place themselves—albeit ironically—in the narrative construct.

Sellers (2016) mentions other names for trends in current culture that can be applied to varied artistic products: "the New Sincerity; aftermodernism; post-postmodernism; hypermodernism; automodernism [and] digimodernism."[125] She describes an oscillation between a modern enthusiasm and a postmodern irony, between "hope and melancholy, between naïveté and knowingness, empathy and apathy, unity and plurality, totality and fragmentation, purity and ambiguity." Sellers further writes that the most innovative digital content today reflects "the particular sensibilities of the Millennial generation." (191)

Informant V recut a widely screened video of a favorite band. She included shots of her friends goofing around on Halloween night in Georgetown. The filmmaker intercut her shots with the band performing in the "official" music video. We can label it an act of Metamodernism because of the interplay between serious fan tribute and sheer goofing around. This is a popular type of YouTube posting made by my Millennial informants. This type of fan tribute video can generate many hits, and it is a particularly metamodern activity embraced by fan communities and encouraged by musicians and record companies. Through YouTube's complex revenue algorithm,

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[125] Sellers, Bridget L. "Millennial Poetics: A Study of Contemporary Poetry and Its Developing Trends." *Pursuit: The Journal of Undergraduate Research at The University Of Tennessee* 7, no. 1 (March 2016): 189-197.

musicians get credit for all the hits compiled by the fan-tribute videos if they use the band's music in the digital soundtrack. This distinction is key. YouTube recognizes the unique digital signature of many millions of pieces of music. It then assigns rights and revenues back to the copyright owner. The musician is better protected from copyright infringement than the video producer is. The ability to generate royalties from fan postings on YouTube is to a significant degree why musicians seem not to object to their public's postings online. There is additionally a sense that this sort of tribute video is of the moment and contemporary. Filmmaker V, mentioned above, shot unique footage to edit into the original Slipknot music video; she set her shoot and reshoot in a location that she knew well, bringing something specific and personal to her fan posting.

Filmmaker Z was not working from within her social network but was instead making a video about a musician met while studying abroad. This construct is unique, a chance meeting in "real" life leading to an online digital post. It shares some similarities with other examples in that the filmmaker was not working from commercial considerations: "The first song I came up with was one from a street artist I met in Bath... I had recorded him play live and so I had a bunch of b-roll that I could use for a music video." Whether she or the street musician ever made any revenue for this posting is not relevant. This filmmaker was looking to capture and frame a lived event. Filmmaking provided that opportunity. Auslander (1999) explores the interplay between the recorded and the lived experience; I engaged his theories more fully in the introduction. We see in this film world a free-flow between the social and the artistic, a blending of lived spaces that fits the metamodern framing.

124

This framing can also apply to the manipulation of the tools of production. Filmmaker H owns very high-end camera equipment: he references the Canon H1, a camera mostly used in bigger budget feature films. Interestingly, he used it to make a music video for his mother.

> I am recording audio of my Mom playing guitar at my house. At first, I used my zoom H1 by itself and the results were not so great because I could hear ambient sound… Placing the mic at the neck of the guitar produced the best results.

The ability to make a "home movie" on Hollywood caliber gear is relatively new to this era. Irony concerning his mother would not be received well across the generation space, so in that film can be seen only the one component of Metamodernism, unless we stretch its meaning to include the personal, the private and play. This 20-something filmmaker owns the Canon H1 camera for his wedding photography business and can use it for artistic, ironic or playful work, as he sees fit. This blending of the personal with the professional is widespread across the digital community. There are some examples of home movies shot on 35mm film during the analogue era, but this was an elite practice, Dezi Arnaz for example shot home movies on 35mm color film, but he was a Hollywood insider, one of the most successful producer/actors in television history.[126]

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[126] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=woYs85r3aSo (accessed 2/13/18)

Informant EE thought precisely about making a film from her life, but she did not want it to mirror her previous effort at documentary.

> I could do 5 more films about Fox Hunting in Maryland, but I am afraid that my first one was so fun that I couldn't give the next one justice. It's like when filmmakers make a great movie and then make a sequel that completely plummets...

This informant writes self-reflexively, distinguishing herself from other "filmmakers" when talking about commercially motivated sequels to a financially successful project. She was "playing" at the medium much like someone who picks up a guitar on Saturdays. This is nothing new; before the contemporary period, one might "play" at making home videos, for example. The Oxford English Dictionary, OED defines play as to "engage in activity for enjoyment and recreation rather than a serious or practical purpose," and to "amuse oneself by engaging in imaginative pretense," and additionally to "engage in [an activity] without proper seriousness or understanding."[127] Of all the various definitions of play offered by the OED, these three best help frame the act of playing behind and in front of a camera. In performance studies we think of play as performative, and in ethnography, Geertz coined the term "Deep Play" to explore leisure activities that contained an element of danger inside the play (he uses high-stakes wagering in Indonesia as an example, while I apply this construct to film festivals where a bad screening can inflict harm to a filmmaker's reputation). The movement between amateur play and professional work is a final component of this rethought Metamodernism. In other words, amateur,

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[127] https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/play (accessed 2/13/18)

professional and play are all part of the same work process. Informant EE was not engaged in the business of filmmaking. That is the point of these past examples: filmmaking as play is made possible when the barriers to entry—or the costs of entry—are set low enough to allow for imaginative pretense.

On Set with Digital-Native Directors

These filmmakers grapple with the director's dilemma on their no-budget film sets. I introduced this phrase to explore the director's on-set power (or lack thereof) in a de-centralized, non-professional setting. Traditionally, the director has been an authority figure—someone able to hire and fire—and as such, a respected, even feared, authority figure. In a patriarchal construct, the cast and crew report to the director who, in turn, reports to the producer, who reports to the studio executive, the financiers. On the no-budget digital set, however, the director has less outright authority over a project. This fosters dialogical ambiguities in the director's identity. Specifically, no-budget directors do not have power to hire and fire volunteer workers on a no-budget film, because those workers are often impossible to replace. Further, they are giving their time free, so they expect shared-ownership of the output. I found film sets where anyone, anywhere on the set could call "action." This is not a problem faced by directors on professional film sets. Professionalism dictates that everyone knows their roles and behave according to standard procedure to insure the payment of wages.

No-budget filmmaking is a form of play (albeit serious play, see Geertz, regarding "deep play," 1972).[128] Anyone can participate, revenue is rarely a consideration, and everyone is an author, from the director to the actor to the boom operator, but is there any risk involved in this kind of play? Deep play is fraught with meaning and great stakes, and therefore carries some risk—in the case of festival participation the risk can be loss of reputation or loss of funds without possibility of financial gain—festivals have fees, and travel costs money.

Paul Osborne (2015) described a Hollywood film crew as "Being like an Army" while a micro budget film crew is like a group of commandos, "each one with a specific role vital to the success of the mission." [129] I prefer the allegory that no-budget filmmaking is like guerilla warfare. The rules are suspended, and often it is better to ask forgiveness after the fact, than to ask permission before. Many of these filmmakers own their own gear, thus controlling the entire means of production. They are aspirational, hoping to learn film technique and then transition into professional jobs in digital media or cinema. They are self-financing, funding their student film work out of pocket.

Metamodernism illuminated trends in digital cinema, including hybridity between forms of irony and sincerity, work and play, rules. It is helpful, however, to move beyond the framing to consider how the informants see their own onset behaviors, performances. How do they interact with actors? How do they bridge the space between nearly professional gear and a non-professional film set where

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[128] http://www.sas.rochester.edu/psc/clarke/214/Geertz72.pdf (Accessed 2/6/18)
[129] Paul Osborne, "Fleshing out the Skeleton Crew," *Movie Maker 2015 Guide to Making Movies,* Vol. 21 Issue 110, p30-33. Godard compared the film crew to a train in motion.

everyone makes up a workflow as the camera rolls, where actors may or may not show up on set on-time, where the sound-guy calls "action," and where no one is being paid to participate?[130] Informant B, as a first example, wrote of anxiety and the appropriate role of the director on set. As mentioned earlier I label this phenomenon the director's dilemma, in which a director working in a no-budget situation has no financial authority over the cast and crew, and no ability to coerce them via the threat of withholding money or expulsion from the set. As Filmmaker B wrote,

> To be honest – this project is terrifying… One thing I noticed was how sensitive I was to not being too bossy. I did not want to come across as too pushy or ungrateful for their help, but there is a certain amount of direction that the actors require. I didn't realize how vague I was being about directions until I started to think about the types of questions [the actor] was asking about her character. If I had explicitly told her in the beginning, it would've helped quite a bit.

To circumvent potential collapse a director must be an excellent team builder. He or she must be organized and trustworthy. One can ask how a 20-something year old filmmaker can find their performative authority as a director. Filmmaker A, describing her production plan, writes of a shifting vision. She made "numerous changes" to her original plan during filming and then editing. This filmmaker felt that her "initial vision was too broad" and she needed to refocus. In my experience, a shifting vision is survivable if collaborators invest in the film. If there is no financial investment, then they must invest emotionally. Filmmaker A wrote:

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[130] I will explore this in more depth in Chapter 3 where I examine Generation X filmmakers but can first use the Millennial generation surveys to explore workflows.

I knew I was being too ambitious and I needed to scale down my vision in

order to finish the film. I realized that I can't be a perfectionist, and in a

professional setting I would have more time to edit and make a longer film.

Filmmaker C describes a variation of the difficulty faced in managing an all-volunteer

movie set, the scheduling of cast and crew:

I made a calendar for the planning process to help keep myself on track with

interviewing... Creating a schedule that best fit all of our schedules became

the most difficult part.

Why was it difficult? They "all play a sport after school" or were busy on weekends,

which "made it even more difficult to manage in the time." Filmmaker D was

shooting a short narrative film and needed to cast actors but had no budget to pay

actors, cast, and crew for their time. She wrote about her casting difficulties. Acting is

both a talent and a skill, and good actors cost real money. This filmmaker had

difficulty casting a male lead, and she considered changing her script to "have an all-

girl cast." She wrote of a potential upside in that the romantic comedy "would be

progressive and may even be a better thing as it will help the video stand out from the

typical 'Boy/Girl' relationship."

Filmmaker F wrote of production problems. She was able to learn on set,

correct her initial errors, and reshot footage with little consequence. In professional

settings, the cost of learning on set could be prohibitive and could potentially risk

professional status. Hence, a system of apprenticeship developed in the film industry.

Film schools, family connections, or union membership provided entry into an

apprenticeship. Today, filmmakers can simply pick up, check out, rent, or buy their

gear and learn as the camera rolls, all with little financial consequence. Informant F could not use any of her initial footage. The wireless microphone was "not connected to the proper outlets." She simply contacted the subject "to see if he could do a second interview." After correcting the first error,

> I was able to go to Baltimore city where [the subject] resides. We used two cameras instead of just one to capture different angles and also to make sure the audio was clear.

Director R, as in the above example, had technical difficulties. He had to reshoot his interviews multiple times and finally after several tries got usable material. He had missed the error until editing, "only to realize that I had accidentally switched the audio receiver and transmitter with one another." Further:

> I had the transmitter in input one in the camera and placed the receiver on the subject's belt, so when I imported the footage into Premiere, I hear loud white noise. The second interview I did, the batteries in both the receiver and transmitter died after a short period of time. Luckily I was able to purchase some at a nearby store, but it still put a twenty-five-minute delay on production.

As we saw previously, there is no penalty in the current era for learning with the camera—or microphone—in hand.

Professionalism and Funding

Informant O bridged the space between amateur and professional production by gaining entry to a production facility, thanks to her mother being an audio engineer with access to a studio:

My mother's recording studio is amazing… we were lucky enough to be able

to utilize one for a full hour. The quality was so crisp… I don't know how I

would have been able to pull off such professional quality work if not for the

lucky chance that my mother worked at a radio station.

Her story is, ironically, indicative of a path formerly taken to acquire professional

credentials in the analogue world: a parent in the profession would open doors to the

industry, the union, and a skill set. Now, a parent in the industry is no longer

essential. This video artist's path reflects the more traditional journey. It is today the

less common route taken by new artists.

Mayer (2008) wrote of professionalism in media, specifically television.[131] In

her construct, identity is conflicted by competing needs to express unique talents

inside of a notion of professionalism that requires team homogeneity. "The sociology

of the professional stresses the homogeneous community of uniformly trained

members who share a common knowledge and goals." Further, she argues that the

"ambiguous boundaries of media professionalism" permit a fluid movement into and

out of the profession, which further clouds identity. Television production is not a

field that requires certification, a specific education, or professional licensing. In fact,

in my experience as a 20+ year TV professional, television has an anti-intellectual

tradition—even in news production—that marks its producers. This assists an

examination of young filmmakers exploring their own professional and amateur

identities.

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[131] Vicky Mayer, "Guys Gone Wild", Cinema Journal 47, No. 2, Winter 2008

For Mayer, professionals in media exist because institutions recognize their status. "The market to be a television producer is not exclusive, nor does it require years of training." Etzioni (1969) labeled producing as a "semi-profession." Producers do not save lives, are not credentialed, and engage primarily in "communication."[132] Inside the current revolution in camera technology, we are seeing the next evolution on the very near horizon as cameras on phones achieve the "nearly-professional" status discussed in Chapter One. This is very exciting indeed, but it further blurs professional identity, as noted by Mayer and Etzoni. High quality, inexpensive cell phones means millions of film cameras around the world in the hands of millions of filmmakers. Filmmaker G took a novel approach to filmmaking, scraping "the more expensive camera options"—expensive is a relative term, contemporary high-quality cameras being historically *in*expensive—and instead chose to shoot her movie on her phone. She "tried to rent" higher-end video cameras, but they were "completely out." It is fair to ask if everyone who hits record on his or her phone is a "producer." The answer is an ambiguous no; to suggest otherwise would be to dilute the art form. A producer is someone who wears the mantle, traditionally as awarded by a media company (in my case NBC News first gave me the title), but today can include someone who simply grabs the status for themselves, engaging in identity creation. It is convoluted, and confusing. The only choice we have, however, is allow everyone who labels themselves as a producer or director to wear the title. Allow everyone constructing cinema—even on his or her phone—to be a producer.

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[132] Amitai Etzioni, "Preface," *The Semi-Professions and Their Organization*, Ed. New York: The Free Press, 1969

I questioned the student filmmakers about their aspirations, specifically what types of media they hoped to be making in a decade. Forty-one out of fifty-two respondents gave a written answer. Most students wanted to work in traditional media such as TV, Film, Advertising and Documentary, nobody mentioned YouTube by name, and a few mentioned blogs or podcasts.[133]

> Making films in the drama genre relating to the aspect of love, marriage and the wife should make for some laugh-out-loud moments considering I've always acted as if my ex-girlfriend was my 'ex-wife.' 1/30/2015 1:02 AM

Multiple students expressed a desire to work in television and documentary:

> I hope that in 10 years I can be producing my own television show.
>
> 1/28/2015 1:32 PM

That answer reflects my personal aspirations while a film student.

> A Super Bowl commercial is my 10-year plan.
>
> 8/27/2014 2:22 PM

An unsurprising conclusion to draw from these comments is that most students aspire to be in nearly every aspect of professional media. Others have no interest in the profession; perhaps they are non-majors looking for a fun elective. It seems clear, however, that the bulk of these students will not be content remaining as media outsiders, but instead aspire for professional success. They see their work in student and fringe filmmaking as a kind of apprenticeship to the professional world. This is not new, and in fact, such apprenticeship is the traditional role of film, media, and

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[133] Appendix 8

T.V. training programs. What is new is that the means of production have changed through student ownership of camera gear.

Digital video has no costs beyond the camera, computer, and digital memory. Many young filmmakers today already own a laptop and cheap memory cards; they can shoot an abundance of material with no extra marginal costs. This is different from traditional filmmaking where an extra foot of film costs additional money and directors need to be prudent by shooting only what they need or can afford. This new type of filmmaking costs more time and less money: Filmmaker L wrote of the volume of work in editing a digital film. He wrote, "The interview only lasted about five minutes, but it took hours to cut it down and rearrange the clips that went well with my film."

I asked the student respondents what sources they had gone to for funding. The most compelling observation about these responses is that not one student sought outside funding for their work. No one applied for grants, went to a film studio, or sought a bank loan. I received 38 written responses (See Appendix 6). To fund their movies student producers are turning to their bank accounts, their parents, and academic financial aid. One student lists a business making wedding videos as the source of their funds, another proposes a Kickstarter fundraising campaign through social media. One writes, "I have a part time job" while a classmate planned to borrow cameras from the University. One student wrote:

> I have used minimal to nonexistent funds from my own pocket, and the
> pockets from everyone else involved 6/3/2014 6:00 PM

It is compelling that no one sought outside funding for his or her work. Student filmmakers see this process as personal, individual and not one paid for by an external entity. They acquire tools cheaply and make their movies using those tools, whether cameras from school, their cell phones, or parents' cameras.

When asked what sources they would use for current and future projects, 39 students responded to the quantitative survey (see table below). Of the respondents, a nearly equal number indicated that they would look to Kickstarter (64%) versus self-finance (66%).[134] This is significant. Kickstarter requires outreach into social media for funding from friends, family, and a network of connected individuals. This is not bank financing, studio funds, or an independent film business model. It is a means of leveraging the social media world to move into a quasi-professional filmmaking space.

Suzanne Scott (2015) examined Kickstarter campaigns, describing crowdfunding sites as "spaces in which marginalized voices can make a transformative intervention into popular culture,"[135] encouraging producers and scholars to reconsider the audience's role in media production. In this construct, crowdfunding fosters what Levinson (2009, 2013) calls the consumer/producer in *New New Media*. The "Amateur YouTube producer" can point the camera at themselves, friends, the public or celebrities with "almost equal facility."[136] Scott asserts a recalibration in the moral economy of a project when fans (or family)

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[134] Kickstarter is a web-based funding site for charity, small business, independent artists and miscellaneous fund-raisers
[135] Suzanne Scott, "The Moral Economy of Crowdfunding and the Transformative Capacity of Financing," *New Media & Society*, Feb2015, Vol. 17 Issue 2, p167-182. 16p.
[136] Paul Levinson, *New New Media*, Pearson, 2013, p.50

become backers. E. P. Thompson's (1971) description of moral economy, "the social expectations, emotional investments, and cultural transactions that create a shared understanding between all participants within an economic exchange."[137] Crowdfunding allows the filmmaker to grow from self-financing while allowing the contributor to play at the role of Executive Producer. As I found with our Kickstarter campaign, a small contribution of $25 fosters more than just a reward (t-shirt or DVD); it builds a community of contributors, backers, and even producers of a project.

Thirty percent of respondents hoped to work with a film studio; numbers that indicate that even in the long-term most contemporary student filmmakers see the activity as self-financed, personal, or as part of a community of funders (table 5). Less than one-third see the activity as something possibly funded by traditional sources such as film studios.

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[137] Jenkins and Green, 2009: 214.

Table 5

Student Film Funding

Which sources would you be interested in using for current and future film projects?
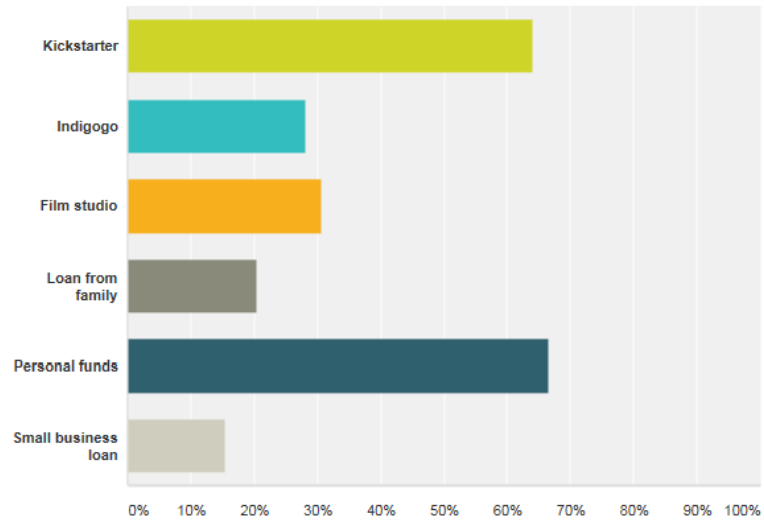
Answer Choices	Responses	
Kickstarter	64.10%	25
Indigogo	28.21%	11
Film studio	30.77%	12
Loan from family	20.51%	8
Personal funds	66.67%	26
Small business loan	15.38%	6
Total Respondents: 39		

Later questions show that these students aspire to be a part of the professional system to a large degree; these numbers seem to indicate that the financial pathway is somewhat unclear.

Distinctions traditionally drawn between the experienced filmmaker and the student filmmaker are, to some extent, becoming arbitrary. This is clear on the festival circuit where student and professionals screen films side by side, one after

another, and compete for the same prizes. As a person working in the professional

environment and teaching in a university digital film major, I find this realization

shocking. The doors are open. Student filmmakers are walking into classes having

written scripts and made films. Very few points of demarcation between amateur and

professional filmmaking are as clear as they were in the analog era—if they still exist.

The most significant distinction that stands in contrast to this trend is financial.

Professional filmmakers have access to capital and to markets. Student filmmakers

must improvise, or like fringe filmmakers, self-finance.

Generation X filmmakers bring professional constructs to the filmmaking

process. With these younger filmmakers, however, the opposite process seems to

have occurred. Why is this important? Because it is new, and the revolution is

happening at light speed (or shutter speed). Young people have a trajectory that was

not available to older artists. They have the means of distribution on their laptops. I

have witnessed a revolution during the first half of my professional career. Moving on

from questions about process, I dealt more specifically with self-image. I asked if

they saw themselves as professional filmmakers. Why or why not?[138]

> Yes. But only if I can pull together a great team. 9/1/2015 7:05 PM
>
> I would say yes because I have learned how to make film as far as meeting
>
> certain standards. 1/29/2015 4:54 PM
>
> No. I have no training nor structural knowledge of film-making.
>
> 9/8/2014 8:32 PM

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[138] Appendix 10

One informant felt that language would be a barrier to professionalism:

> I would like to be one. But it's scary to think about getting into the real world, it's very competitive and English not being my first language is always a struggle for me because it makes me a little insecure. 9/5/2014 1:10 PM

Further:

> No I do not because I have never made anything professionally, and all the films made were never intended to be made for profit. 6/3/2014 6:02 PM

Students are finding new ways to make movies. They often own the means of production. They aspire to be a participant in professional media. They are knocking at the door, knocking down walls, and ignoring traditional pathways into filmmaking such as union apprenticeship.

In conclusion, we see in digital native filmmakers a freedom from old ways of working. They embrace digital tools without concern for how films are supposed to be made. Sometimes this can manifest as non-professional, mundane or messy. Other times, it displays freedom of form, a novel approach to the art of filmmaking. They do not have one foot in the past and another in the present. Instead, they are freed from a past where individuals could not control their own output, where an institution had to sanction work. Observing digital film students, I see the fluidity of the native navigating their home terrain.

In the next chapter, I move from surveying beginning Millennial filmmakers to conducting an analysis of older, more professionally advanced Generation X producers and directors who seem to be stuck on a bridge between the analog past and the digital future.

Chapter 3: Generation X, Digital Immigrants Working in the Present while thinking of the Past

Generation X filmmakers are aware of traditional Hollywood production styles and techniques. Many cut their first movies on film, many apprenticed to Hollywood, worked for studios and networks. They bring embodied skill sets to the new digital cinema. Metaphorically, they have one foot in the past, and one in the future. Members of Generation X (born between 1965 and 1985) trained in the analog era but now have digital tools. They are a generation of filmmakers in-between two mediums, with a toe in both, bridging the space between two distinct work traditions, the analog and the digital.

The chapter begins with an investigation of filmmaker surveys, finding that Generation X filmmakers look to the past for archetypes while using tools of the current era. In this way they are digital immigrants. Immigrants want to hold onto their heritage, meaningful vestiges of the past while also embracing the new world. This can be problematic in that it does not allow the digital immigrant to fully embrace digital innovation. Generation X filmmakers are encumbered by how things are supposed to be done, how they used to be done, how they were done by the greats of the past. After reflection on the survey data, I move from this research into an analysis of one specific Generation X filmmaker, experimental director Shom Das of India. I look to her films for insight into this bridging of two worlds, past and present. Because I am also a member of Generation X, I include in this chapter my practice-based observations concerning the production of our digital feature film. This close analysis of my experience writing, directing, producing, exhibiting, and selling a no-

budget digital feature film titled, *Aspirin for the Masses* makes me better able to comprehend digital filmmaking technique. The importance of this practice as research approach is that a scholar can learn with their hands, by doing. The embodied is an important component of the research. That section is primarily narrative as I chronicle our years-long process of digital filmmaking. We began the project in 2010, concurrent to this research project and ended in 2017 when amazon.com acquired the license to air our film online in 15 international markets. During that period, we bridged past and present, looking for a new work process built from the ghosts and echoes of our analog pasts.

Consider the phrase digital immigrant. Educator and video game designer Marc Prensky (2001, 2005) coined the phrase "digital native" to describe Millennials, and "digital immigrant" to refer to those not born into the digital world (Generation X, Baby Boomers, Elders). In his construct, digital immigrants adopt new technologies but use them with an "accent," because they "still have one foot in the [analog] past."[139] This is a useful concept in which to understand and interpret the work of Generation X filmmakers. On our film set most of the cast and crew were born in the 1960's and 1970's. We could remember the era of film. We brought to our work nostalgic reimagining of traditional work practices as we navigated this new digital medium. Shom Das, the Gen X filmmaker featured, employs the tools of digital media with an eye to her analog past. In our conversations she referenced herself as in dialogue with French filmmaker and historian Jean Luc Godard's cinema, specifically his "cinema without words" as she described his analog and her

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[139] http://www.marcprensky.com/writing/Prensky%20-%20Digital%20Natives,%20Digital%20Immigrants%20-%20Part1.pdf (accessed 3/12/18)

digital film aesthetics, for example (appendix 31). We are both immigrants in time, nostalgic for the past, working in the present.

I employ the following structure in exploration of Generation X no-budget filmmakers:

1) analysis of the DIY filmmaker survey,

2) content analysis of Shom Das's DIY films,

3) a narrative and chronological presentation of the AFTM process from pre-production to distribution,

4) the film festival application process

Before presenting my practice-based research, I present an analysis of the survey designed for established Generation X, DIY filmmakers. This research shows that they use varied means of funding their work, from bartering or product placement to fundraising campaigns through Kickstarter or Indiegogo. Still, as with the students described in Chapter 2, many of these filmmakers are self-financing to a significant degree.

Filmmaker Surveys

I conducted an anonymous online survey of DIY filmmakers through the Survey Monkey website.[140] These surveys show filmmakers in the middle of their careers grappling with new possibilities and new digital workflows. One respondent wrote:

I don't have a lot of money, so I try to spend next to $0.00 if possible. I usually opt for the bartering system. For instance: I offered product placement

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[140] See Appendix 1 for text of the survey.

to an author for her book in exchange for her guest appearance as an actor and

I did an establishing shot of the location storefront with sign prominently

featured in exchange for allowing the shoot to happen there. A friend of mine

was kind enough to sponsor lunch for the cast and crew, but that was just

because I am lucky enough to have some really kind-hearted friends.

Product placement funded by advertisers is a major source of revenue in Hollywood. I find it compelling that a DIY filmmaker has found a way to use product placement as a tool to barter a needed element in their film—in this case an actor—as a means of cutting out-of-pocket expenses. I found that DIY filmmakers use this type of bartering in myriad ways. This is important because it provides fringe producers a tool for leveling economic limitations to some small degree. DIY filmmakers will for example, barter with fringe musicians for music to use on their soundtrack. One filmmaker wrote that several musicians contributed their songs to their movie free of charge in the hope of gaining exposure for their own work. Additionally, one offered musicians small equity shares of the film's potential royalties (.25% of Net Profits for example) if they liked a piece of fringe music, thought it fit well in a specific scene, and decided to use it.

Most of the fringe filmmakers I observed are self-financing their work. In my surveys, I asked experienced DIY filmmakers what funding sources they would pursue with future projects. Nearly sixty percent of respondents answered that they would self-finance future projects, at least partially. The same percentage answered that they would look to film studios for funding in the future. This expresses the duality in the Generation X identity, both self-sufficient and looking to a large

144

institution for support. The chart below (table 7) from Survey Monkey shows how experienced filmmakers in this research will look to finance future projects:

Table 6

DIY Funding
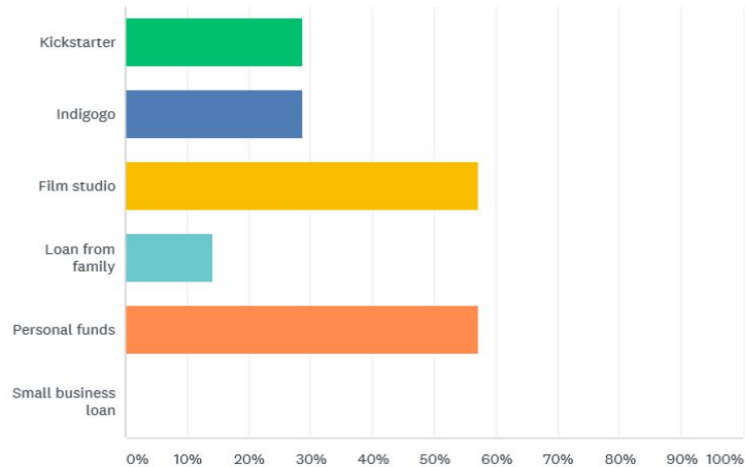
One of the Filmmakers responded,

> Ideally, I would like to personally finance my own film projects and maintain all creative control.

This notion of creative control is vital, something to be protected in the digital era. Further,

> However, if I found the right people/film studio to collaborate with, I would potentially be open to those opportunities. I have tried running two unsuccessful crowd-funding campaigns for my music and I'm about to launch another one via PledgeMusic, but I really don't enjoy those options.

One respondent referenced the website Kickstarter as a place they would potentially look for funding, writing, "I have yet to create my own projects but have worked on many projects that use Kickstarter and Indiegogo to help raise funds."

I asked questions regarding intent and meaning such as, are most DIY films made to break down the barriers to Hollywood. Is the work political or primarily just narrative entertainment? Can tropes be identified that help to create distinct categories for this type of filmmaking? In addition, what type of gear was purchased and how was it used? One respondent wrote, "I bought my camera because I realized I could get paid to take pictures as a blogger, but it has become even more useful and satisfying in my work as a theatre artist and musician." Writer Matthew Creamer (2012) described the process by which Generation X comedian Louis C.K. shot and distributed a digital stand-up special online. The comedian worked outside of the standard distribution channels—such as Time Warner owned HBO—to sell his 2012 comedy special to fans for $5 over the internet. Using this model, C.K. was able to connect with fans first through the Reddit website using the popular "Ask Me Anything" (AMA) page, and then later with the download link. Creamer argues that this novel approach to funding garnered good will, lessening piracy. The comedian generated more than $1 million in revenue, with an estimated $220,000 in profit. [141] DIY filmmakers aspire for this engagement. David Fair (2004) chronicles a successful fundraising campaign by a first-time filmmaker in South Africa, Tim Greene.[142] The producer solicited 1,000 investors each willing to risk 1,000 Rand ($163), and every pledge entitled the donor to a share in the film's future revenue.

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[141] Matthew Creamer, "The Digital A-List," *Advertising Age*, 2/27/2012, Vol. 83, Issue 9
[142] For further reading see http://kwailawai.blogspot.co.za/2004/10/boy-called-twist.html

"It's been a fantastic solution to a seemingly impenetrable problem— so I can see no reason why other filmmakers shouldn't adopt this model, reproduce it and improve on it," Greene said.[143] Generation X filmmakers are actively pursuing these and other pathways.

It is helpful to shift focus to one artist discussed in this project, Indian DIY filmmaker Shom Das. She self-finances her movies, spending an estimated $15,000 per film. She has completed seven feature films as of this writing. She consistently brings new projects to the film festival marketplace, including her newest film in 2018.

Content Analysis

I find that no-budget cinema is unmoored from traditional film style, often to its detriment. Freedom of form is the hallmark of this style. Many times, it is a blessing, although often it is a mixed bag. On the one hand, not being tied to tired practices and tropes can be an artistic strength. Filmmakers can be more creative and take risks in both content and form. On the other hand, it can be problematic, as no-budget cinema can lack the broadly applied standard of quality associated with professionalism in filmmaking. Professional cinema may be boring or repetitive across a series of sequels, but Hollywood movies are well shot, have clean sound and professional acting. Professional films may lack soul, but they rarely lack minimum technical quality. This is not always the case with no-budget cinema.

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[143] David Fair, "Money Matters," Hollywood Reporter -- International Edition, 8/17/2004, Vol. 385, Issue 12

Professionalism is a vital construct. It is instructive to consider an online

video posting of performance scholar Laurie Frederick's dance alter ego from 2008,

she's a 4-time U.S. National Champion in Ballroom and Latin Dancesport, who in

this video competes with her dance instructor, "a professional [dancer] ...originally

from Poland." The broadcast panelists discuss professionalism in performance

competition, specifically the blurring of distinctions, "she's very good, I couldn't tell

who the professional was."[144] Frederick makes her living as a scholar, but dances like

a pro in ballroom competition. The video shows two well-paired performers, one

male, one female. Both dressed in white, both move athletically and with great

precision. Frederik makes significant effort to infuse her performance with

theatricality through facial gesture and the performance of joy. I find this delineation

of amateur versus professional to be problematic in this short video just as I see it

problematized by my informants in film festival competition. The distinction is

important in college athletics and in Olympic competition as well, where it is deeply

problematic. We expect these athletes to perform at top levels—including being

heralded the best in the world on billion-dollar broadcasts—while maintaining the

purity of amateurism. Perhaps, finally, this symbiosis between amateurism and purity

is a relevant frame, despite the problematic construct. In film festivals, so-called

amateurs compete side by side with professionals, often vying for the same prizes.

When the amateur wins, it forces a rethinking of these categories, redefining some

distinctions, rendering the notion of professional in some key ways, an anachronism. I

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[144] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LdO1HOI-9do (accessed 2/5/18)

see my informant's drive for film festival wins reflected in Frederik's precise steps on the dance floor.

Digital cinema in the current era is freed from the traditional rules of filmmaking such as dramatic structure, character development, and broad market appeal. Hollywood absorbed traditional dramatic theory from the Classical era, which had been rethought over the centuries and made manifest in the theater. We see traces of Aristotle in contemporary film theory. Hollywood built traditional film structures mostly to ensure that the audience would follow the narrative, be moved by the characters, and enjoy the story. Hollywood in the "Classical Era" constructed film in a way that strove to hide production practices to envelop an audience in the narrative. All are important characteristics of good movies, but they can also be restrictive.

Digital DIY filmmakers today can do what they want, and how they want, with little fear of low box office returns because the costs of production have fallen so low. As we saw with students, digital technologies allow DIY artists to experiment with the classical rules. Shomshuklla Das an Indian filmmaker and theater artist. She self-identifies as experimental. This is common in the fringes of digital filmmaking. This art form allows for a vast range of expression and at a low cost. Many digital filmmakers use the words surreal, experimental, or non-narrative to describe their work. They take inspiration from filmmakers Maya Deren, Stan Brakhage, Jean Luc Godard, or David Lynch. I met Shomshuklla "Shom" at the St. Tropez Film Festival in 2015, as chronicled in the introduction, where our films were in competition. We bonded on the red carpet, cheered each other at the awards ceremony, and became fast-friends. Shom is a primary informant in this study. Shom is a filmmaker who

149

could not have worked as easily or as consistently in the previous era. In the past decade she has produced nine non-narrative feature length experimental films. Her films are not the kind made by Hollywood producers, they have no visual story arc, no Aristotelian structure, strange characters and employ a non-Hollywood narrative logic.

   We can frame Shom's red carpet performativity by employing Butler's (1988, 1990) "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory." [145] Butler writes that gender is constructed, or performed, much as an actor performs from the stage. The body is a materiality that bears meaning, and the manner of this bearing is fundamentally dramatic. Picking up Turner, she writes that in repetition and ritualization performance becomes real. Judith Butler's notion of the subversion of "seemingly seamless identity" is a monumental idea, especially as it relates to those individuals unhappy with the performative aspects of their own identity. Butler writes ". . . gender is a project which has cultural survival at its end." We can apply this to construction of the filmmaker's overall identity as well, and not just the gender. In the context of red carpets and ritual it provides a frame around performance of identity. The walking of the red carpet shifts that frame. Before the red carpet, one can perform aspiring filmmaker; afterward the filmmaker can remove the aspirational from the performance. With this ritual, the identity is felicitous.

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[145] Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory." *Theatre Journal*, Vol. 40, No. 4 (Dec. 1988), pp. 519-531, later anthologized in *Performing Feminisms* (1990).

In this section, I attempt an analysis of Shom's films, *TikTok TikTok,*

Hopscotch, Sandcastle and Chhutti Aar Picnic.[146] Shom came to filmmaking after a

career in music, experimentation in theater, and publication as a poet in her three

languages, Hindi, Bengali, and English. She makes films for herself first and then for

an exclusive audience at film festivals. The more general audience looking for car

chases, cheap laughs, traditional storytelling, and shootouts is not part of her artistic

construct. Shom described herself in one of our follow-up email exchanges as "highly

influenced" by Truffaut, Almodóvar, Polanski, and Godard. She speaks further of her

"special style" in which she "break[s] syncing words."[147] She takes an unconventional

approach to sound, dialogue, traditional rules of framing, and mise-en-scene.[148] Her

films in Hindi, English, and Bengali are as follows:

Sandcastle (2013): Her debut feature in Hindi and English

Chhutti Aar Picnic, or "a holiday and a picnic" (2014): Bengali and English

Hopscotch (2015): Hindi and English, and

TikTok TikTok: (2016) Her first English language feature

Flowers and a Lap of Rose: (2017) Currently in Film Festivals

Murals: (2017) English and Hindi

Mixed Medium: (2018) Her newest project

Her posting of *TikTok TikTok* on the website vimeo.com describes the film, "In a

dream, the lovers met, they loved and then they departed."[149] Rohan Kapoor is a

restauranteur alone in his kitchen, longing for love. Mia, a fashion journalist, comes

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146 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q7Atvmtr9yk
147 Email exchange on 5/20/16
148 See the Glossary for a description of this term, and its traditional usage in cinema studies
149 https://vimeo.com/155073853 (Accessed 5/24/2016)

to him in a dream. She is looking for an interview that will help her to build her writing career. *TikTok TikTok* opens in a manner that reaffirms digital filmmaking aesthetics and plays with those same characteristics. The opening image is of a small clay bell in very shallow focus. The depth of field in a shallow focus image is narrow; in other words, items in the foreground and background fall away into a blur. This is a consistent aesthetic component of contemporary digital film brought about by changing camera technologies (see Chapter 1). The revolution in image making however, was not matched by a revolution in audio recording technology. In many digital features, the audio is the first marker of the low budget. *TikTok* starts with a very scratchy audio recording of a beautifully wrought Indian love ballad. The noise in the audio reads low budget. Shom playfully pulls out of that dirty audio with a scratch across a record turntable; we have not been listening to badly recorded digital audio, we have been listening to vinyl. Digital meeting analog with a wink from the director.

TikTok TikTok is rhythmic, non-narrative, and poetic. It is languid. Shom shoots her feature-length movies in 4–7 days. As a director, she edits in camera, filming in nearly real time. Editing in camera is a technique used by low-budget filmmakers such a Robert Rodriguez, who shot *El Mariachi* for less than $10,000.[150] Rodriquez took every shot he needed exactly once, and he made the film in chronological order as often as was possible so that no time and no film stock was wasted. Shom is shooting digitally, so the concern about wasted feet of film is an anachronistic historical problem, but time is as expensive as ever. Taking single shots

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[150] Rodriguez discussed more extensively in the Production Practices section. I reference Rodriguez as he inspires many current digital filmmakers.

in the narrative order is one of the ways that she can finish a film so quickly. Anecdotally, we shot our feature in a different manner; whereas her film took three weeks to shoot and edit, ours took five years. There is an ironic quality to Shom's process in making an experimental film in that she is also documenting ontologically true moments. For example, the character Rohan makes an omelet to open *Tiktok*. We see the real time making of that omelet, with a few edits. That meal shows up later in the film in the dream sequence. We can posit that the amount of screen time between the cracking of the eggs and the consuming of breakfast reflected real time.

TikTok TikTok's motifs include on screen poetry:

The clock is time and time is destiny,

Space and eternity

Clock says little but says it all,

TikTok, TikTok

Spoken dialogue is non-synchronous; when characters talk to each other, they do it off-camera. In this way all audio recording is in post-production. There is no need for a boom microphone or large crew when this technique is utilized. Earlier I mentioned *El Mariachi*. Recall that entire feature was shot film first, with audio matching achieved in post-production.

Photograph 9

Rohan entering a surrealist dream in Shomshuklla's *TikTok TikTok*

Hollywood has created a definition of *good* cinema—we know that

Schindler's List is a great movie because it simply is one, and it won multiple

Academy Awards. Non-narrative, surreal film can feel self-indulgent by those

standards. Shom is not practicing narrative Hollywood filmmaking. Her work is

nonetheless compelling because it forces a shifting of aesthetic expectations. In the

surrealist film tradition, the line between dream and reality is blurred. Characters fall

asleep and dream in surrealist film. The audience is often unaware of having entered

the dream with the character, or of having left the dream. David Lynch uses this

technique in his narrative big-budget films *Blue Velvet* and *Mulholland Drive*. The

audience must sort-out what they have experienced. *TikTok* shows us the main

character Rohan sleeping three times; we can read the first two as the bookends for

the surrealist dream, and the third as a surrender to the dream while the credits role.

Rohan has chosen to live in the dream and let the real world take care of itself as he sleeps. I am not attempting to elevate one style over another. Surrealism shows up in many forms of media. The Sit-com *Louis* used surrealism effectively in Season 3, Episode 9, "Looking for Liz / Lilly Changes." In the episode, Louis sleeps—the mark of Surrealism—as a washed-out head of Liz (played by Parker Posey) floats above. When Liz appears on screen, a chorus sings along with her. Liz mouths the words "I Love You" repeatedly. Louis C.K., like Shomshuklla, uses non-synchronous sound during surreal moments. Watching this we know that we are in the dreams of Louis and that traditional rules of narrative structure are suspended, at least until Louis—or Rohan—wakes.

Shomshuklla's *Hopscotch* is a lyrical, rhythmic, psychological thriller produced for $15,000, shot in a few days, and edited in a few weeks in 2015. *Hopscotch* won multiple prizes from international film festivals in Milan, Mexico, France and the United States. A single actor Sohini Mukherjee Roy occupies the screen the entire move playing The Young Woman. A voice in her head talks in English first, then Hindi. We get the sense that this character is unstable, and the voices represents conflicted identities in her inner-monologue. She is a character divided from herself. The code switching is a narrative device, allowing us to sort out the voices in The Young Woman's head.

Photograph 10

Sohini Mukherjee Roy from Shomshuklla Das's *Hopscotch* (2015)

Shomshuklla describes *Hopscotch* as "A story of a young woman who returns home one day to find that a childhood friend, she once lost, is back to play games with her." Those games are psychological. The narrative unfolds in the mind of The Young Woman. There is little dramatic structure in this film, no recognizable story arc, no stated dramatic intent. This is not a film where a character overcomes impossible odds to defeat a much stronger force. This is not a film Hollywood would make, or even recognize. It is hybrid between dance and cinema. As the Young Woman investigates the mirror, holding a conversation with a long-lost friend, there is a sense that she must answer for a grievance. "I never pushed you in the puddle," she says to her reflection. "Well, I want to clear that," her reflection answers back. As audience members, we ask, did she kill this friend? Was there an accident for which she is partially responsible? Is the friend real? Was she ever? The film lets these questions float away in the breeze, answering few. Hollywood rarely employs such an open narrative structure. In the current era, however, open narratives can coexist with

more constructed films, as the digital camera has freed filmmakers like Shom Das to make the movie that is in her mind.

Photograph 11

Frame from *Hopscotch* (2015)

- And I wanted to protect you

Shomshuklla's filmmaking style owes a great deal to French New Wave filmmaker Jean Luc Godard and his notion of a cinema without words. Godard later in his career spoke of an image-based cinema divorced from traditional Western filmmaking style and the narrative constructs handed down by the ancient Greeks. Shom makes movies in this Godard-described tradition. Films with a larger budget can rarely embrace a non-narrative structure since most audiences expect film to include a coherent story. Shom's work contains an individual vision that does not have to answer to the film market. She found an alternate home on the international festival circuit, winning the first trophy in Nice, France in 2015.

Photograph 12

St. Tropez/Nice Film Festival Awards Banquet, May 2015

Aspirin for the Masses

Returning briefly to Ortner, I argue there are three models in the film

business, "Big Budget" or Hollywood, "Indie" film, and No-budget (DIY) digital

cinema. Ortner describes a dialectic constructed within the indie film community,

juxtaposing Hollywood "mainstream" cinema against independent, outsider film

producers and directors. Ortner explores the construct in which Hollywood is engaged

in the business of "telling lies" while indie films explore truth, or reality "as it really

is." Ortner offers categories 1 and 2 above; I add category 3 based on changing

dynamics in cheap digital movie making. Hollywood films are studio produced,

owned, huge budget. Indie films are produced outside of the studios but with budgets

typically over one-million dollars and sometimes into the tens-of millions. They are

indie because the studio does not control the entire process. 2017's breakout hit, *Get*

Out, is an example of an Indie success. An important movie with well-known actors,

it parallels the films studied in Ortner's ethnography. 2015's *Tangerine* problematizes

these distinctions in that it was shot on an iPhone 5, but was made with a $100,000

budget in Hollywood using a professional cast. I study the third category, films made

for less than $25,000 on cheap digital cameras, hence DIY. I categorize Tangerine in

the Indie category because of its budget.

I assert that DIY cinema creates social capital independent of its budget or any

revenue it may produce in the future. Revenue, I suggest, is beside the point; cultural

capital, though, is central to the enterprise. Pierre Bourdieu (1993) in *Fields of*

Cultural Production writes of the most significant currency in cultural production,

taste. Taste is a social field where "agents" maneuver for status and power. Taste is a

factor in cultural capital; in art, cultural capital builds aesthetic constructs. Cultural

items are beautiful or vulgar depending not necessarily on aesthetic distinctions but

based on market conditions. Digital cinema engages in the creation of "symbolic

capital," employing culturally valued concepts to build a form of wealth. Digital

cinema employs traditions derived from traditional film in this respect. Film festivals

are spaces where "consecrating agents," in this case judges, organizers, and hosts,

bestow laurels on participants. The digital filmmakers in turn claim status for their

project by posting festival wins, and even nominations for prizes, on social media, in CVs, and in their offices.[151]

Bourdieu observed that the ranking of symbolic capital and stakeholders inside of individual artistic practices is changeable, as new agents enter these spaces and introduce new kinds of creativity, and subsequently becoming consecrated by their peers. Our community of fringe actors, technicians, and producers, and myself as writer and director, were all looking for this consecration. I think tangentially about punk rock when discussing Bourdieu, specifically the band Black Flag, a punk rock band based in Venice, California that played for small crowds in Los Angeles. They had a significant amount of cultural capitol, were a counterculture force, and engaged in discourse about dominant cultural hegemony (albeit for a small nightly audience). As they became more commoditized their singer/writer front man Henry Rollins published books of poetry, appeared on television as a guest, and even eventually had his own talk show based mostly on the "symbolic capitol" (41) he had acquired as the leader of this band with a hard message that performed in small venues. Henry Rollins was able to turn symbolic capitol into actual capitol by commoditizing himself. This example and frame informs my practice-based auto-ethnography. The team held together for years because of the desire to utilize an elusive symbolic capitol built from film festival laurels won from our work on our no-budget digital feature film, *Aspirin for the Masses (AFTM).*

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[151] http://www.public.iastate.edu/~carlos/698Q/readings/bourdieu.pdf (accessed 4/8/18). Further research would include Adorno's writing on the role of a conductor to an orchestra, asking if like the conductor the film director is systemic and inherent to post enlightenment. See also Michael Baxandall, *Patterns of Intentions.*

In Ortner's construction, Hollywood exerts cultural hegemony within the United States to such a degree that other cultural products must position themselves in opposition to Hollywood's output. I saw echoes of this in my ethnography. In our work on AFTM, we juxtaposed Hollywood budgets against the money we spent to make the film, calling it the "cheapest feature film ever made" in film festival applications, on our online web postings, and in interviews. The implication is that money is corrupting. We offer an alternative to that corrupt kind of storytelling. This argument is lacking teeth to some degree when considering the best Hollywood and Independent films as described by Ortner. Indie films in her ethnography have budgets in the millions of dollars. Many of these films thread a needle: less cynically constructed money-grabs than Hollywood studio productions, *and* better produced than our film.

The film cost $10,000 to make and distribute, but only $500 for the principal photography—hence the claim of "cheapest." We spent $3,000 on food and $6,500 for editing, postproduction, and quality control inspection between 2008 and 2017. These numbers are somewhat misleading. We owned all our own camera gear at the onset of production. The initial $500 cost of shooting got us "in the can."[152] The $3,000 paid for meals for our cast and crew on set, in editing, at meetings, and during festival gatherings. We purchased groceries to make elaborate breakfasts, lunches, and dinners for the group of volunteer equity holders in the film. We bought hard drives, SD memory cards, and rented a U-Haul to use on set as a location. The entire $6,500 spent in post-production, however, went to more standard production costs

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[152] The phrase references an old Hollywood axiom that a film was in the can when it had been shot but had not been edited. Actors could be sent home, a cast party booked, and editing could begin.

such as graphic design, Quality Control (QC) inspection, and an editor's stipend (editors do not work free, unlike actors). We spent $40,000 on marketing and film festivals. This included applications ($3,000), digital prints ($2,000), promotions and marketing ($5,000) and travel to multiple festivals around the globe ($30,000).[153] All members of the team were invited to all events, although everyone covered their own costs for festival travel and awards participation. At the end of seven years, the cheapest film ever made really cost approximately $50,000 to produce and present to festival audiences.

The bulk of production took place in the five years beginning in 2010. Post-production took five years between 2012 and 2017. The timetable was as follows:

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[153] This budget came from three sources, Adam Nixon, Executive Producer provided $30,000; Charlotte Yakovleff, Executive Producer provided $15,000 (cash and equipment), and Donna Nixon-Pinero $5,000.

Table 7

Aspirin for the Masses Timetable plus Expenses

2008-2010 Screenwriting
2010 Casting actors
2011-2013 Principal Photography – Cost $500
2012-2014 First Edit – Cost $3,500
2014 Rough cut screening in College Park
2015 Poster design/printing of DVD's – Cost $1,500
2015-2017 Film Festival competitions and screenings
2015 Premiere in Nice, Milan, Jakarta, Berlin and San Francisco – Cost $40,000
2017 Final Edit – Color correction, audio mix
2017 QC check for online distribution – Cost $1,500
2010-2017 – Food – Cost $3,000

Vincie (2015) chronicles connections between budget and successful completion of a DIY movie. He argues that a filmmaker should worry less about stretching beyond their means for Hollywood-quality production tools, focusing instead on story and inexpensive alternatives to big-budget cinema. He advises, "Shoot on the camera you can truly afford. Good production design, lighting, and sound will matter more to your tablet-viewing audience than shooting on 4K."[154] In the example above I erred by trying to be both Executive Producer (EP) and Director. The story-telling in

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[154] Arthur Vincie, "A Beginner's Guide to Budget," *MovieMaker, 2015 Guide to Making Movies*, Vol. 21 Issue 110, p34-37. 4p.

Aspirin for the Masses suffered from neglect in key places because I was too busy with the job of EP, raising funds, building a Kickstarter campaign, applying to festivals, marketing the movie, attending screenings, and getting it licensed.[155] It was only after successfully completing my task as EP by selling the film license that I took a hard look at my writing and directing.[156] I am unhappy with what I see, and can only conclude that in DIY cinema there still need be reasonable demarcation lines of responsibility shared by a full team, the obvious problem being lack of financial resources needed to build such an endeavor.

Traditionally, the director has assumed the role of authority figure: someone able to hire and fire, and someone who is a respected, even feared, leader in the industry. On a no-budget digital set, however, the director commands less authority and has less outright ownership of a project. Dialogical ambiguities disrupt the director's authority and identity. Specifically, no-budget directors do not have power to hire and fire volunteer workers on a film because those workers are often impossible to replace. Further, they are giving their time free, so they expect shared-ownership. One manifestation of this ambiguity is that on a fringe movie set, anyone, anywhere can call "action." This is not a problem faced by directors on professional film sets. Professionalism dictates that everyone knows their role, everyone behaves according to standard rules to insure the payment of wages. Shared ownership can be a blessing, but it can also lead to disruption on the film set.

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[155] https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/338041289/aspirin-for-the-masses (accessed 1/16/18)
[156] The sale of the film license to Amazon Prime means that within 5-10 years the film will be profitable, every investor will be made whole, the sales commissions will be paid, and royalty checks will be sent to the individual stake holders (actors and crew). As an EP I succeeded, as a writer-director I failed.

Media Scholar Lisbeth Frølunde (2015) explores production practices across digital media platforms vis-à-vis Resemiosis—a decidedly foreign phrase used to describe transformations in meaning making—in DIY cinema.[157] Frølunde asserts a paradigm shift toward an "increasingly complex media ecology," most significantly, the alteration and "republication" of digital texts through various media distribution channels. Resemiosis is a compelling frame. It elucidates new production pathways in the digital DIY community. The filmmaker must be able to work within extreme limitations and accept a final product that reveals the budgetary shortcomings in every shot and every line. This type of movie making allows for flexibility in narrative arc, storytelling, and theme. It is relatively free from influence by moneyed interests.[158]

Donna De Ville (2015), writing about "microcinema," unpacks the largely under-researched worldwide community of DIY filmmakers. In De Ville's construct, microcinema is the new "art-house" filmmaking. Movie theatres like Vinegar Hill in Charlottesville, Virginia, and the Film Forum in New York and Los Angeles, thrived before the streaming revolution. DIY cinema has supplemented the outsider films once displayed exclusively at art houses. The art houses still exist, but much of the film consumption has moved online, into non-traditional spaces, and into small festivals. De Ville describes seeing an unknown, small budget film in a warehouse setting in Austin, Texas:

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[157] Lisbeth Frølunde, "Animated War: Perspectives on Resemiosis and Authorship Applied to Two DIY Film Projects," *Convergence: The Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, Feb2012, Vol. 18 Issue 1, p93-103. For further discussion of complex transformations of contextualized meanings, see Iedema (2001, 2003).
[158] For an extended look at Frølunde see: http://www.academia.edu/2379315/Animated_war_Perspectives_on_resemiosis_and_authorship_applied_to_two_DIY_film_projects (accessed 1/16/18)

> [The] cult film made an impression on me, the pleasure derived from being
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> part of something that few people knew about, the experience of having to
>
> find the place in an unfamiliar area on the edge of town, and the makeshift
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> ambience of the unsanctioned space stayed with me. [159]

De Ville lists seven traits that constitute microcinema distribution sites. They include

the DIY approach; small-scale production; minimal budget; "dedicated and

passionate organizers (often filmmakers)"; sense of community; shared taste; and

exclusive content. Microcinema distribution is not multiplex; the films are "art"

pieces that can be impossible to find in another context. Alvin (2007) lamented the

unraveling of the art house cinema by the mainstream, digital streaming, and the

financial pressures merely to "stay open."[160]

The self-financing digital filmmaker can make a movie on her or his own

terms. Once made, however, the DIY filmmaker has difficulty getting the film

distributed to the worldwide film market. For instance, it is difficult, if not

impossible, to gain distribution to movie theatres and cable TV. Digital distribution

on sites like Amazon Prime has replaced traditional distribution channels for most of

the outsider films I observed, but this route offers revenue under $10,000 per year.[161]

For this reason, DIY cinema must be cheap if it is to break-even financially. There is

little opportunity to recoup large investments. In my practice-based ethnography, I

found access to the multiplex film distribution market largely closed off; I had just a

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[159] Donna De Ville, "The Persistent Transience of Microcinema (in the United States and Canada)", *Film History*, Volume 27, Issue 3, pp. 104-136, 2015

[160] Rebecca M. Alvin, "A Night at the Movies: From Art House to 'Microcinema," *Cineaste*, Summer 2007, 4

[161] I unpack these numbers more completely in the Conclusion.

single screening at a multiplex in San Francisco. However, I did enjoy tremendous access to small film festivals around the world. I detail those festivals in later chapters; in this section, I profile the production of *Aspirin for the Masses*.

Ownership versus Authorship

Before moving into my production process, I consider subtle distinctions between ownership and authorship of this movie. I own only one-fifth of our movie because I bartered 80% of the ownership to individuals who helped make the film, i.e. the producer, technicians and actors. As the writer/director, I own a larger, but difficult to quantify share of the authorship. I am intentionally distinguishing ownership from authorship, arguing that everyone on the film authored a share from the boom operator to the lead actress. Shared authorship is the norm in no budget cinema while shared ownership is highly fluid. In our situation we were careful to sign contracts with every volunteer on the film. Those contracts stipulated percent ownership of the royalties for everyone on the team. Lead actors for example are contractually owed 1% of all film royalties after the initial costs have been paid.

Why is this distinction important? It seems that ownership-authorship held our project together. Every member of the team was able to author their part of the film in an open exchange of creativity, and everyone knew that their efforts meant shared ownership of the final product. In seven years we lost only one member of the team. Calahan (2013) refers to the phenomenon of "distributed authorship" in the digital economy, our film exemplified this theoretical construct. Jeremy Bubb (2010) references the "script as blueprint" model of filmmaking. The shared-authorship approach allowed for massive deviation from the script that fostered actor buy-in.

Like Bubb, we employed a script-as-blueprint model, improvising and approaching

the work as co-authors, or as Callahan describes, engaging in distributed

authorship.[162]

We also carefully submitted documentation to the US Library of Congress to

establish Chain of Title for our screenplay and our finished film. This clear ownership

structure, accompanied by nearly 75 signed contracts with contributors allowed us to

license the film online. I came across many films that were well directed in film

festival competition, but that lacked clear chain of title. For those films lacking a clear

ownership title, a license to Amazon Prime or other streaming services is not an

option. This is the distinction that matters between ownership versus authorship.

Every actor, for example, authored their performance in some esoteric manner from

the screenplay in parallel to their contractual ownership of a portion of the movie.

No-budget filmmaking—Production Practice as Research

In the years between 2000 and 2010, feature filmmaking budgets and costs

fell considerably on the fringes while "professional" filmmaking budgets grew. These

trends were becoming apparent as early as the 1990s. Peter Broderick (1992) wrote of

three Generation X filmmakers, Nick Gomez, Robert Rodriguez, and Gregg Araki,

working in no-budget cinema. He described their feature films, made for less than

$35,000 each, as achieving "greater festival play and much wider distribution" than

other films, primarily short student movies made for up to $100,000. The space

between 1992 and 2017 is significant (as detailed in Chapter 1), though Broderick can

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[162] Further reading, Theodor Weisengrund Adorno. *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*. Translated by E. B. Ashton. New York: Seabury, 1976.

provide a frame when considering other Generation X filmmakers and their work process. In the earlier era, no-budget films were "lucky exceptions," while in the current era no-budget films are screened in every festival, uploaded to YouTube daily, and made across the planet. He wrote:

> There have been notable examples of no-budget features during [the previous generation], including *Return of the Secaucus Seven*, *Chan is Missing*, and *She's Gotta Have It*, but they were seen as lucky exceptions to the rule that feature filmmaking requires hundreds of thousands of dollars. [163]

In 1992, Broderick argued, "terrific features" cost "next to nothing." In this era, *El Mariachi's* entire budget wouldn't cover a week's location fees for an average Hollywood feature. Other Generation X filmmakers though are in Rodriguez's debt, making movies for far less money than he spent on his first feature. Rodriguez checked himself into a one-month drug trial in Austin, Texas where he was a graduate student in film production at the University of Texas at Austin. Per Broderick, Rodriguez spent $7,225 on film, gear, and processing. He edited himself in his apartment on ¾" videotape. He shot the pictures for his film first and then recorded audio later, piecing the elements together in post–production. Working alone, he was able to do a complete first edit at no cost (beyond his initial investment in film stock and processing). He described his process as follows:

> Where I really saved was in shooting the movie silent. A lot of takes would have been blown due to unexpected… noises, and all the things that usually blow a sound take,

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[163] Peter Broderick, "The ABC's of No-Budget Filmmaking," *Filmmaker Magazine*, Winter 1992/93, http://www.peterbroderick.com/writing/writing/abcsofnobudgetfilmmaking.html (accessed 2/22/17)

He recorded dialogue on an audiocassette recorder with a microphone from Radio Shack. This helped him save thousands of feet of film.

> Had I shot sync sound, I would have wasted a ton of film on simply running the camera to speed and slating the shot with a sync clapper… We would only shoot one or two lines at a time, so to have to run up to speed and clap each shot would have used up more film and driven the cost up considerably.[164]

Directors in the current era shoot audio and video in separate takes. They still record on separate media because most DSLR cameras do not have high quality microphones. I was personally inspired by Robert Rodriguez and reminded our team of *El Mariachi* consistently.

In all phases of this practice-based research, human interaction on set and production practice was the focal point. I studied the people making the film first and then later reflected on the finished project. I demonstrate how we worked within budgetary limitations to make our DIY movie. I discuss the means of making the film, including financial and logistical hurdles. I outline the timeline of the writing of the screenplay, and then provide a narrative description of the casting, shooting schedule, and post-production process. In August of 2010, I took a writing retreat to Maine to complete the screenplay for the film. In December of 2010, we held casting sessions and began working with actors. We shot from March 2011 through September 2012 and edited it from May 2013 until January 2015. We did final post-production QC (Quality Control) for online distribution from August 2016 through

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[164] http://www.peterbroderick.com/writing/writing/abcsofnobudgetfilmmaking.html (accessed 2/22/18)

May 2017. It took over seven years to write the final version of the script and to shoot and edit the movie.

But before we could get there I first needed a partner. Unlike Rodriguez, I could not handle the massive task alone. In early 2010, fringe producer, Charlotte Yakovleff, approached me. She had produced four low-budget digital features for very little cost. She asked if I had a script that she could make her next project. We agreed to collaborate on a play script I had adapted years before as a master's student at New York University called *Aspirin for the Masses.* For this proposed film project, I would be the writer and director and she would produce, we would both act as Executive Producers, raising funds. The digital DIY revolution allowed me to break into the film industry even though my skills were less polished and came out of another medium—television. This section is a study of how a group of inexperienced filmmakers turned an idea into a feature-length film with only $10,000 in the bank.

The production started with no budget. Our plan was to not spend any money at all, i.e., to make it truly "no budget." As mentioned above, I had $10,000 in the bank, but did not want to spend any of it. We owned the means of production, the camera, lights, microphones, laptops, memory cards (recording media), and editing software. Participants volunteered on the film.[165] Typically, in Hollywood, the producer handles logistical coordination of the movie set, including the supervision of technicians, the signing of contracts, and scheduling. The Executive Producer does not typically take a role on set. Rather, the Executive Producer's job is to raise funds. I reluctantly self-financed the film with $10,000. Although my goal was to be

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[165] I would later add two Executive Producers as a courtesy: Charlotte because of her massive donation of time, and Marie Altar whose company licensed the movie to Amazon Prime in Aug. 2017.

writer/director and not Executive Producer, I had little choice if I wanted the film go

into production. In a sense, I was investing in our movie and myself. In the end, seven

years later, I spent the $10,000 plus another $20,000 on film festival participation,

travel, distribution, and advertising. My mother came on board as co-Executive

Producer, contributing $5,000 to marketing. These exploding costs are typical in "no-

budget" film production. People on set must eat, vehicles need gas, DVDs must be

printed, and travel is not free. Therefore, most film festivals, including Sundance,

allow any film that costs $25,000 or less (not including travel, distribution, marketing

etc.) to compete in the "no-budget" category.

In my mind, I thought we could shoot the movie for no money, or at the most

for $500. I knew from the onset that I had to rent a moving truck— I had written it

into the script and did not want to write it out. I had to buy many additional external

hard drives to share footage between members of the crew. We were constantly

backing up the video files to these multiple drives, handing footage off to editors (two

had to quit the film and never returned the drives) and then buying completely new

sets of drives as the editing progressed. $7,000 got us to our first screening in late

2014. At this point, we entered a new phase of production. We could have simply

posted the film online to YouTube and called it finished. Instead, we entered festivals

and continued to edit; I did that editing myself mostly, as I could not afford another

stipend.

I paid an additional $1000 to design a poster and Blu-ray and DVD covers.

$3,000 went to festival entry fees, and then I spent another $18,000 traveling to

festivals after the film was accepted. In total, I spent $25,000[166] from December 2010 to May 2015 when I premiered a "rough cut" at the St. Tropez International Film Festival in France, and then another $5,000 getting the film through its festival run and edited for Amazon Prime. All this money came from my personal contribution to the budget. For that contribution, I own approximately 20% of the royalties—the rest I share with the sales agent, producer, cast, and crew—and I keep any trophies or laurels won. I bought trophies for anyone on the cast and crew who won a prize. For example, when we were awarded best cinematography in Milan I purchased trophies beyond the one given by the festival for everyone who had helped shoot the film, including the producer who at times ran a camera.

Screenwriting and Pre-Production Software:

Once we had our script, our budget, our financing, and our team, we set out to make the film. That process starts with pre-production, the planning for the shoot, auditions and casting, rehearsals, rewrites, props, and location scouting. Riikka (2010) references the "invisible" role of the screenwriter on traditional authoritarian film sets, a construct influenced by the auteur theory of the French New Wave. The auteur theory posits the director as primary author of a film. On our set, however, no one was invisible. Everyone from the boom operator to the lead actor offered input into the final screenplay and helped to shape the content of the movie.

I wrote the screenplay in Final Draft Screenwriting Software v 7.0. I was the only person on the production who had purchased a license for the program, so I had

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[166] I should note that some of the travel costs were offset by assistance from my academic departments. To date I have received $3,500 of assistance, covering approximately 10% of my budget, and the $5,000 marketing contribution for the Co-EP.

to export the script in a format that the producer, cast, and crew could open. I exported PDF and TXT files that Producer Charlotte Yakovleff read in Celtx, an open source version of screenwriting software that uses the Mozilla platform and could be acquired license free. Charlotte did all our pre-production planning in Celtx and plotted the shooting calendar using this free resource. This is an example of why our film was so cheap to produce. Since no licenses were required, we did not need to buy one for every member of the production crew. In addition, once all the pre-production work was finished in Celtx we were able to distribute a PDF copy of the 120-page screenplay with scenes numbered and props tallied to all 50 plus volunteers on the project.[167]

Pre-production

Pre-production is all the work that must be finished before a cast can come together to shoot a film. It includes auditions, final script updates, meetings with funding sources, building a budget, and breaking down the script into a shooting schedule. Traditionally shooting occurs out of order to use people, time, props, locations, and vehicles efficiently. We began pre-production in September 2010, just as I was beginning my Ph.D. coursework. Auditions were held at the University of Maryland, College Park on Saturday, December 4, 2010, 10:00am-5:00pm in the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center. As a new Ph.D. student, I was able to reserve the room free. Throughout this film, I utilized myriad free resources at the University, thus saving thousands of dollars in potential budget costs. Our pre-production budget estimates included these hoped-for savings. We posted audition notices online.

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[167] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Celtx - accessed 6/22/15

Notices clearly spelled out that all acting roles would be unpaid (Appendix 23). On the morning of the auditions, we had printed sides from the current draft of the script. Sides are excerpts from the screenplay, usually short scenes with two characters. A member of the casting staff or an actor in the film reads one side while the person auditioning for the film reads the other side. As Bourne (2015) writes, "Many Hollywood directors will not consider casting an actor if they do not know their sides by audition time." We did not have that luxury, as we were auditioning for 35 parts. Seventy-five actors auditioned, most from the Washington, D.C. metro area.

At the audition, our volunteer DP (Director of Photography) Elizabeth Zosso, volunteer Assistant Producer Amy Tate, Charlotte, and I were present. Because we were working on an extremely limited budget, we had to shoot the movie around all our schedules. Professional filmmakers tend to go to the movie set "on location" and shoot long hours for several weeks until the film is "in the can"—an archaic analog-era phrase meaning the film has been shot and processed. In our case, pre-production alone took five months to complete. We could not afford to sequester the cast and crew. Instead of costing cash, our film cost time, and plenty of it. This differs from traditional filmmaking in that bigger budget films have the funds to pay for timesaving. Theirs are projects designed to generate revenue, which cannot be realized until the film is finished. In that arrangement, dollars spent today generate profits faster with effective use of time. In our construct, we had little hope of generating profit; our goal was to build social capital, awards, and non-financial benefits from our no-budget movie. Profit was never part of the plan.

Casting the movie

We set up a digital camera at the auditions and attached that camera to a laptop using screen capture software. This gave us a cheap method of recording all auditions for later analysis. We used a long-practiced technique of screen tests, much like those done in Hollywood, although digital, and were able to shoot them cost-free since our team already owned the camera, cable, and laptop.

We tried to cast racially blind. Rich (2016) posits a dichotomy where Hollywood in the past had ignored diversity while indie films embraced racial, ethnic, gender and class difference. Producer Effie T. Brown, an African-American producer, speaking at the Provincetown International Film Festival said she did not see herself in afternoon television as a child of the 1970s. In the current period, her work in indie film allows her greater exploration of racial diversity and individual identity. "Brown is a stalwart of the indie world and has produced or worked on many beloved films that explored, as she said, people on the margins." [168] In our case, diverse people were willing to work with us toward shared symbolic capitol. It was difficult in some ways, our choices were limited by a willingness to volunteer, but we ended up with a diverse cast in large part because of our financial constraints; we cast whoever was available. (Appendix 16) We needed cast members with time who could work for free. They sought access, credits, and an IMDb profile. They were willing to invest in our project, themselves, their cultural capital, and the building of their public identities through our team efforts.

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[168] Ruby B. Rich, "What Is at Stake: Gender, Race, Media, or How to Brexit Hollywood," *Film Quarterly*, Fall2016, Vol. 70 Issue 1, p5-10. 6p.

Call backs

We held our callbacks on January 15, 2011. Once again, we posted a casting notice online (Appendix 13). We waited almost seven weeks to call the actors back, which is a very long time in the film industry. As fringe producers, we had to find other ways of making a living. There were work conflicts, out of town trips for the professionals (teachers, cops, salespersons) on our team, babies to be born, and birthday parties to attend. This was just the first stage in a years-long series of delays that came to define our production. We had to wait because we had no money at stake to force our hand. We were not unmotivated. We simply had to bow to the reality that everyone needed to make a living. This was a side-project. We were weekend warrior filmmakers. Our pace reflected that. There was no banker or investor pressuring us to finish faster.

At the callbacks, we added a second AP, Michelle Ieng. Of the five of us in attendance, three of the technicians would drop out of the production over time. Elizabeth left to have a baby, Amy simply stopped showing up, and Michelle worked intermittently from home but rarely came to the set after 2011. During this period, we cemented the 35 parts, and of the 35 actors cast, only one actor would drop out of the film even though it would take nearly two and a half years to finish shooting. This may seem like a huge cast for a no-budget film, and it was. I originally wrote the script as-if I would have a sizeable production budget. In the final screenplay, I chose not to cut roles despite the difficulty of juggling this huge group. We took a substantial risk—if one of our leads had dropped out during production, the film could have imploded. That single actor who did quit was under 18 and dropped out

177

early to study for the SATs. I learned that most actors will strive to complete a role because they want their performance to be seen in the finished film.

We held one final private audition for our last role, the male lead. We had trouble casting this role, as it was tough to find a young male willing to volunteer to this extent. Karin Rosnizeck, a woman active in D.C. theater, hosted us in her home. Karin encouraged her actor friends to attend. It was social and fun and a party, but ultimately none of these male actors worked out. To fill the 35th open role, one of our female leads suggested her husband, who had attended the callbacks and rehearsals, and was subsequently cast in the part of her romantic counterpart. We assumed that a husband and wife could play romance together on screen.

Casting Notices

On February 1, 2011, Charlotte sent out the casting notice to all the actors in the film, and by February 2 she had gotten back a "yes" from nearly everyone offered a part. Her email to the production team was fun and enthusiastic (see Appendix 27), and it set the initial tone for our production. Most important was her excitement and her joke about getting the cast "all drunk…" On the surface, this seems to be a throwaway, however, it helped to frame and structure a production made on the weekends, during leisure time, as a leisure activity. She finished the note with an enthusiastic "we're on our way!!!!"and signed Charlt, an abbreviated, casual form of her name that she would use in every correspondence. I am a much more formal producer, but I was not producing this movie. She was, and she struck the perfect tone. Perhaps it was because she had done this four times before, and she saw the need to keep everyone relaxed and stress free.

Bourne (2015), an award-winning director of low-budget indie films, asserts that immediately after the first table read, an intimate social such as a BBQ or wine and cheese party can be an excellent group bonding event. "Besides being the perfect opportunity to let cast and crew become better acquainted, it's also a great time for individuals to have access to the entire team to ask questions or seek clarifications."[169] Charlotte may have learned this technique from previous film sets, but regardless, she came ready to turn our process into a party. I had resisted at first, not wanting to spend the money. Writing this after finishing the film, I can see that her persistence in creating a fun environment probably saved our movie. Without this tone and the friendships that formed, we would have lost people. They committed to the community of fellow filmmakers.

I was grateful to have an engaged producer. She was head taskmaster, cheerleader, chef, and official timer. At a shoot, her job was to keep us happy, fed, and on schedule. Therefore, she was Producer, Unit Manager, Script Supervisor, Assistant Director and Caterer. In a Hollywood production, different people handle these roles, and each earns a full-time salary. Osborne (2015) is a successful micro-budget writer/director. He uses a producer and a script supervisor on his shoots. For him, this meant one more salary to pay and one more staff-member to feed. He needed somebody to "deal with all the legalities and logistics."[170]

Charlotte was able to perform these roles over a period of years. She was working for a large equity share of the film—equal to my 20% ownership—but with

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[169] Bourne, W. H., "Rehearsing with Actors," *Videomaker*, May2015, Vol. 29 Issue 11, p52-56.
[170] Osborne, Paul, "Fleshing out the Skeleton Crew," *MovieMaker*, *2015 Guide to Making Movies,* Vol. 21 Issue 110, p31

no upfront payment. As of this publication, those points are worth zero dollars. We both knew that the term "equity share" was in some ways a hollow promise. At our first meeting with the full cast and crew, I stated directly, "This movie will not make any money." However, if by a miracle it did, we pledged to share the equity with every member of the production. We put that promise in writing, signed contracts with all the cast and crew, and went to work. This was the best workaround we could find to direct exploitation of the volunteer labor on the film. They worked cheaply, for the cost of a sandwich some days, but they knew that if money was generated they would not be cut out from the potential windfall. This is still, no doubt, exploitative of the volunteer workforce, but there was at least a mechanism in place to ensure that the exploitation would be remedied if the film made money. To date our film has not generated a dollar of profit, the marketing and distribution deal we signed in 2017 is today still paying off commission.

Ortner describes the no-budget indie set as stacked with friends—incompetent, stressful, non-professional. "For super-cheap, usually first-time, independent films, the crew is often made up of friends of the filmmaker… even in those situations it is very easy for a crew member to begin to feel exploited."[171] Yost (2011) in *Filmmaker Magazine* advises "micro-budget" directors to compensate volunteers with "understanding, attention and compassion," creating a unique testing ground for new methods.[172] We found that shared authorship and shared ownership was vital.

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[171] Ortner, 2013, Kindle location 3970 (Accessed 3/21/17)
[172] http://filmmakermagazine.com/28731-the-microbudget-conversation-unpaid-crew-vs-under-paid-crew/#.WNP-ck3FDcs (Accessed 3/23/17)

Contracts

In this section, I detail the contracts referenced above and then discuss the rehearsals we used to refine the screenplay and cement the characters. To all our stake-holders we offered contracts that included partial ownership of the movie. This insured buy-in and helped them feel less exploited by the process. This film was never about making a profit, but I wanted to make sure the actors saw that I was honest by offering them contractual shares. One share point equals one percent ownership of royalties after costs. We wrote contracts for our lead actors that included 1 point that capped out at a $10,000 payment if the film made a profit of $1 million. Considering that our production budget was initially less than $10,000, this level of profit struck me as highly unlikely, but I wanted it in writing because it would act as motivation to finish the film.

On the surface, this appears to be misleading or even manipulative. In truth, it is an acknowledgement of the inherent barriers to entry into the film marketplace. To make a movie is only part of the financial process. Once the movie is finished, a producer still must be able to sell the film. This proved to be exceedingly difficult but not impossible, a process I detail in Chapter 4. I saw this in advance and was direct with our team. It was important to me that I be clear and honest from day one. I never held out the promise financial success, because I simply did not believe it was likely. Finally, therefore I financed the film with my own money. I did not want to lose someone else's capital and knew that the non-financial benefits this film would

potentially garner would be sent primarily in my direction, making my expense

worthwhile.[173]

It is fair to ask why anyone would give away weekends for years with this

lack of payoff. I believe that we retained our cast and crew for this extensive period

because we shared both contractual and artistic ownership of the project. We

encouraged actors to develop own their roles, to help shape their characters. That

owning and shaping of the performances began during our extensive rehearsal

period.[174]

Rehearsals

Once we had our cast and production team, we were able to transition into

rehearsals. Looking back, the rehearsal period was vital. It gave the cast a chance to

invest in the screenplay through improvisation play. Tapley (2008) describes

rehearsal on Woody Allen's set for *Vicky Cristina Barcelona*. As a director, Allen

eschews rehearsal, believing that actors can give a more natural performance if they

are still learning their character. This may work in a fully professional environment,

but it would be disastrous on a no budget set where amateurism is the rule. The lead

actress in that shoot, Penelope Cruz, told Tapley, "We had a meeting for the movie in

New York, and then I didn't see him [Allen] again until he said, "Action.""[175] Cruz felt

that she was less self-reflexive on set with Allen, less critical of her performance in

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[173] I needed a dissertation topic, and I knew any laurels would hang on my wall.
[174] In all, I offered 40 shares to the cast and crew and 30 shares to the producer, while keeping 30 shares for myself. These shares, based on net profit, are paid after the production costs are covered and after the sales agent takes their commission for representing the film at international film markets. After licensing by Amazon Prime the shares will potentially have value at some point during the ten-year licensing window.
[175] Tapley, Kristopher, "Penelope Cruz," *Daily Variety*, 12/10/2008, Vol. 301 Issue 48, Special Field p10-11.

the moment. She mentioned further that this was not the standard way of working on a big budget set. This worked for Allen, it would not have worked for me, as I don't have the professional directing skills to pull it off.

I suffered from the director's dilemma. I was expected to be an authority figure. [176] What happens, however, when that figurehead has only implied power—the nominal authority that comes from assuming the title of director—but no real financial power to wield? DIY directors can lack power because their cast and crew understand the true power dynamics. The director must be able to first form and then later articulate a vision of the project. Lacking a vision, coercive power, and financial resources, a director can feel powerless on the no-budget film set. This dynamic creates one of two outcomes. The production either moves forward with combined ownership, or it implodes through infighting, late arrivals, missing people from crucial shoots, or even a complete collapse of the production. In my research, I have seen both outcomes.

When there is no system in place to compel cooperation, the director must provide an artistic vision that collaborators invest in. Robert Greenleaf (1970) coined a visionary leadership theory entitled "The Servant as Leader." In this essay, he defined Servant Leadership as community first.[177] Traditional leadership generally involves the accumulation and exercise of power by one at the "top of the pyramid." Servant leadership, however, is different: "The servant-leader shares power, puts the needs of others first and helps people develop and perform as highly as possible." This theoretical tool allows for a better understanding of on-set dynamics when a no-

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[176] See Adorno's writing on the conductor.
[177] https://www.greenleaf.org/what-is-servant-leadership/ (Accessed 1/31/17)

budget director is unable to exercise authoritarian control over the set. Lacking the ability to hire and fire, a no-budget director must lead with vision and a sense of possibility; otherwise, the project will likely collapse. The director needs to convey a vision to the cast and crew that includes non-financial rewards for participation. For example, film festival laurels are a primary non-financial driver of film participation. Without this visionary leadership, participants can fall away from a no-budget production, leaving the director alone to perform multiple on-set tasks like lighting, cinematography, editing, and even acting. One production fell apart before the first shoot when no one, including the director, showed up for the shoot, leaving me, the researcher, alone on set.[178]

I felt this dilemma on our no-budget film set most strongly when I heard various members of the crew, the Director of Photography, the Assistant Director, the Boom Operator, and even actors call out "action" on the set. Such behavior reflects the mutual ownership of a project where professional and or commercial considerations are removed. The startling discovery I found in this research is that ownership of such a project is fluid. When there are no salaries and no careers to protect, ownership is shared across the production with every member of the team taking their share.

The letting-go (giving up) of perfectionism is an unfortunate but necessary reality in no-budget DIY filmmaking. Many of us—myself included—would like to work like Stanley Kubrick who famously made Shelly Duval, Jack Nicholson, Tom Cruise and other actors reshoot scenes repeatedly, into the scores, or hundreds, of

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[178] Field Notes, October 13, 2012.

takes. If I had shot in this manner, I would have alienated actor/stake-holders to the

point that they simply might not appear at the next call. The prestige of working with

Kubrick, his visionary style and the pull of a signed contract gives an authoritarian

director an opportunity to drive the cast and crew to amazing artistic heights. In this

construct, directors may heap abuse onto their cast or crew with little concern

regarding their continuing participation in the project. Shelley Duvall was driven to

the brink of madness working for Kubrick on *The Shining*, but her performance in

that film is magnificent, although that madness may have cost her dearly for the rest

of her career.[179] *The Shining* is a unique circumstance, but it does help make the

larger point that in no-budget cinema a director cannot act with extreme authoritarian

blindness.

Bourne (2015) asserts that time spent with actors in pre-production allows for

cost-savings later in a shoot. He occupies a space between that of Woody Allen and

my own personal process: "There is a fine line between rehearsing enough and

rehearsing too much." Because of this, some directors will rehearse with cameras

rolling. They may claim it helps acclimate the cast to the cameras or help a novice DP

and crew prepare for actual shooting, but "in many cases it's to capture a unique

performance by the actor—a performance that happens only when the material is

fresh." According to Bourne, some directors will rehearse parts of the script with the

entire cast but save emotionally charged scenes for one-on-one work with the

individual actor. It seems that if the cameras are rolling, then it is no longer a

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[179] You can investigate Shelly Duvall, madness and Kubrick here:
https://www.rollingstone.com/movies/flashback-shelley-duvall-battles-stanley-kubrick-w450947
(accessed 1/15/18)

185

rehearsal. What is clear, however, is that digital tools allow for varied production processes due to the low cost of filming.

During rehearsals, we improvised and examined every aspect of the script, and I wrote an additional part for myself, thus becoming the 36th member of the cast. Our actors were almost all inexperienced volunteers—new graduates from acting schools, retired police officers, bored homemakers, extras in big-budget films. These were people excited to be in a movie. They did not seem to care that it was a small film shot on a digital camera. They were hungry for the lived experience. They wanted to see themselves on screen.

On April 21, 2011, I emailed a new ending to the script to Charlotte. This was important because I had been wavering over the final scene since the Romanian play reading in 1996, but here I had to make a final decision. This scene made it into the finished movie, with slight alterations made on set.

CUT TO:

Joni is near the edge of the roof. She peers over. ROMAN is watching her.

ROMAN: That's a long fall.

JONI: You came back.

ROMAN: I did.

JONI: I missed you.

ROMAN: I missed you.

JONI: I lost the baby.

ROMAN: I know.

JONI: It was an hysterical pregnancy.

ROMAN: I know. But enough of that. We'll have our own. In fact, I think you're pregnant now. You look pregnant.

JONI: I do? I am?

These additions to the screenplay came after our improv sessions. They are the product of group collaboration in rehearsal. With that collaboration, the shared authorship, the film would not have had an ending.

Bourne (2015) advocates two table reads, one for the cast and a second for the technical crew. He recommends that the writer be present for the readings so that questions about the screenplay can be addressed and fixes made. For Bourne, film is a collaborative process, and "it's imperative not to consider the script an iron-clad document." Bourne wants to "be respectful" of the source material, while acknowledging that the script will morph over time, changing with interpretations by the director, actors and, eventually, the editor.

This description mirrors the process we stumbled into almost by accident when we somewhat blindly created our process from scratch. I asked every actor to help create his or her part. We rewrote the screenplay through extensive back-and-forth between me as writer and the actors as co-writers. Every joke was examined, every scenario revised. I kept a copy of the screenplay open on my netbook. I would take notes and revise dialogue in moments of improvisation. An actor could see their intuitive ideas represented in the screenplay, and I think that successfully encouraged

them to buy-in to the process. There was a shared sense of authorship created that would carry us through the end of our schedule. Anecdotally, for me, and I believe for the cast, it was rewarding to see the improvisations in the finished scenes many months and years later. It took us as long to rehearse the movie as some films take to shoot and wrap up production, but we needed that time to learn the craft.

We held our first rehearsal on Friday, February 18, 2011 in the basement of The Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center (CSPAC 1809) at the University of Maryland. The building houses a Theater Department and a Music Department so there were plenty of spaces available for rehearsal, improvisation, and blocking work. We effectively treated this first month of rehearsals and improv as if we were making a play rather than a movie. This gave the actors time to learn their roles and lines without the pressure of a camera rolling. We started with an individual rehearsal for the two leads, Laura and Daniel, but were not able to rehearse again until Saturday, March 12. There was a long delay because the room at CSPAC was taken by a play rehearsal. We picked up rehearsing again with Michael, Cassandra, and Erich, and the team of movers—there for comic relief—Lateicia, Amber, Rachel, and Sogdiana. Stephanie (Daisy Gibb) was not able to make that rehearsal so we used a stand-in for her part and conducted improv with the rest of the actors in attendance. Small films must adapt to this fluid style of scheduling. Certainly, it was frustrating, and it could have sunk the movie. But it did not because we kept our cool and had fun. We moved forward in small steps. Charlotte and I acted as the playtime leaders, and when the cast made interesting new choices, I encouraged their exploration. I asked the cast, as freethinkers and artists, if the lines sounded right to "their ears." The screenplay was

188

much stronger because of this work. This day was a high point in the writing and improvisation process.[180]

We held our third rehearsal on the weekend of March 25–27. On Sunday, April 3, we held the fourth rehearsal. These long gaps in time were perhaps the biggest surprise to me as we moved forward with the film. I had not anticipated so many blank spaces in the production calendar. I had read of productions shot over two months on the weekends. This is what I thought we would do. I anticipated wrapping the shoot by September 1, 2011. I missed that target date by two years.[181]

In these rehearsals, we were starting to nail down the emotional center of the movie. I followed our improvisation work with a final script rewrite and then a full table read by the entire cast on April 30, 2011. (Appendix 19) This would be the *only* time in seven years of work that the entire cast would be together. Such is the nature of no-budget cinema; people do their work and then go back to their lives. We wanted a festive event, so we provided food and drinks. You could say that we bartered free food and drink for their time. Charlotte, our producer, was a wonderful cook. She turned every shoot into a "family" meal—or at least a facsimile of one.

Shooting Script

The shooting script is an industry-specific document that breaks down the screenplay into producible, measurable parts. It has additions like scene numbers, cast

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[180] That day we rehearsed with the following schedule:
1:15- Lateicia, Amber, Rachel, Sogdiana arrive
2:30 Matt, Karin, Tony arrive
5:00pm-Matt, Karin, Tony, Lateicia, Amber, Rachel, Sogdiana, Arty (arrive)
6:30 wrap
[181] See Appendix 18

lists by scene, extras lists, and prop lists made by the production manager, unit manager, and assistant director. In our case, Charlotte as producer was handling all these roles. On April 24, 2011, Charlotte had finished formatting the screenplay. We stopped making changes at this point. Lines cut on set were crossed out on the hard copies of the shooting script (Charlotte's and mine were the archive copies and the actors made notes into their own scripts as needed). This was also the version of the screenplay ultimately entered into the Sundance Screenwriting competition (it would make the final round of selections). A film is authored three times—as a screenplay, on set, and in editing—this can be considered the completion of the screenwriting phase of authorship.[182] This was the submitted to the Library of Congress to establish chain of title.

We began production with a finished script and shot that entire script. If we had not worked in this way, it would have been too easy to get lost. We had no professional assistant director or script supervisor to keep track of our progress, so we had to rely on notes made to our working scripts, and for that to be feasible, we stopped improvisation once the final script was complete. Actors explored their lines on set, but everyone knew that the shooting script would be the blueprint. However, on a few occasions I did find myself cutting scenes when shooting had run long, and the owner of a space complained. In these cases, I had to make cuts and pray that we remembered when it came time to edit the movie. I should have been clearer in my notes, but because I was focused on acting, I was unable to keep up my work journal always. This did create a few problems for our editors here, as it became difficult

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[182] See Appendix 20

years later to remember those sequences trimmed in the field. I am glad it was infrequent, or it could have been disastrous.

Precise delineation and clear definition of roles on set helps to avoid errors that will have consequences in editing. In retrospect, an overwhelming need to have every person field multiple responsibilities was partly responsible for the countless errors we made in shooting. In a professional film environment, directors get paid to direct, screenwriters get paid to write, and DPs get paid to capture the visuals. Merging roles is not part of the standard workflow in a bigger budget film. This seems extreme. Why can't a screenwriter include camera directions? Why shouldn't the DP talk to actors? It has to do with the industrial division of the filmmaking process. The work is assembly line. Everyone must do his or her specific task if the film is to be completed efficiently and professionally. If you are working outside of the film industry, though, you can assume multiple roles. No one is afraid to assert his or her opinion. Individuals can walk off the set never to return, and there is little or no financial penalty for leaving the community. For this reason, the team built our shooting script, and everyone crossed lines of responsibility on an ongoing basis. At times it was anarchy, chaos.

Working with Actors

As described earlier, nearly the entire cast was non-professional. As a result, we had to confront conflicts that would have been less common in a more professional environment. On a big budget set, infighting can be contained to some degree by the nature of salaried work, i.e., you can put up with more annoyances when you are receiving a paycheck. We did not have that luxury. We had to treat any

191

conflict as potentially ruinous. On March 9, 2011, prior to shooting, I received an email from one of our actors who was unhappy with their scene partner. This actor was frustrated with the feedback they were receiving, writing "I was trying to put beats in the script to change emotion." There was frustration that the partner did not respond to the beats. The note ended with a hint of barely veiled desperation, "I hope I feel differently after the next rehearsals because I love that I am a part of this project." These two actors had trouble working together the entire shoot. We did not have the luxury of replacing an actor in a scene. Instead, we had to try to find a solution on set while the cameras rolled. What we could offer was to try to solve conflict as best possible within our limitations. To this end, Charlotte was again our champion.

Rehearsal spreadsheet

Charlotte kept a spreadsheet for 2.5 years with all the actors and crew and their availability times. She had to work around the schedules of more than 50 people, which proved to be impossibly difficult. We had to take time off during vacation travel season; we had to shoot around our lead actress Laura Blasi's shifts at CVS. One could ask, why? Why do so complex a movie? Why 50 plus people when films have small casts all the time? The simplest answer was that we had this script ready. In the future, I would only work no-budget with a smaller team. That is the takeaway lesson for me, that the size of the cast and crew should reflect the size of the budget. My naive mistake in planning led to a more difficult shoot; I based my initial vision on the number of actors/crew typically used in a much larger film. However, once we were in the middle of that initial mistake I had no choice but to charge forward.

192

Production Management

Pearce (2012), an attorney for the film industry, described the production management role on the producer's team. In the kind of bigger budget films Pearce is describing, the producer has a production manager and accountant working in tandem to control the process. In our case, Charlotte assumed these roles. Osborne (2015) uses a military allegory to distinguish between the studio crew and the no-budget crew. If one is an army led by a general, then the other is a commando force. "When Robert Rodriguez pulled off El Mariachi for a paltry $7,000, it was heralded as a movie miracle. Now, if you toss a roll of gaffer's tape into the air at any film festival party it will likely bounce off a gaggle of directors who just did the same thing." (30) A filmmaker himself, Osborne made a feature for $30,000 using a crew of six people. He described days of shooting with a crew as large as nine, or as small as one; he acted the part of director, camera, sound technician, and probably script supervisor. We did not have a script supervisor. On a big budget film, this person's job is to keep track of continuity. They make sure that the actors wear the correct clothes in specific scenes, that cigarettes burn in the right direction, that drink levels stay consistent, and that jewelry does not disappear in one cut and reappear in another. Our lack of continuity nearly cost us digital distribution. In one scene a cell phone consistently disappeared and reappeared in a character's hand. The Quality Control (QC) inspector examining the near final cut in 2017 refused to pass the film until this was fixed. Fixing that was our last hurdle to distribution, it would have been unnecessary if we had had a script supervisor on set in 2011. On May 5, 2011, Charlotte sent me an

email asking about the character Joni's comings and goings between scenes.[183] She

wrote, "I don't know . . . if she's coming from the beach, or park, or a memorial…" In

a typical production, the producer would not have to worry about these details. This is

why typical films are so expensive, and why there are such extensive crew lists in the

closing credits. When you have millions of dollars budgeted to a production and hire

professionals, the film holds together without showing these seams. On a no-budget

shoot, these seems become impossible to hide. With our skeleton crew in place, we

began shooting.

Production 2011

We asked Rachel Kepnes to join our production team. Cast in a small part as

Janice, she was also interested in producing. This was the first of many times that

lines blurred between actor and crew. As mentioned earlier, I acted in the film when

the role of a clinic administrator came up midway through the improv sessions. This

change, however, involved someone going in the opposite direction: a volunteer

stepping into a larger role. Such a development was a testament to the community

environment we created, and it would prove to be a lifesaver as the months turned to

years.

On May 1, 2011, we began shooting. This start was nearly six months after

our auditions and much later than I had initially envisioned. Charlotte sent an email

on April 28, 2011, laying out the logistics of our first day. It is remarkable to look at

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[183] See Appendix 29

the email and think of how energetic we were at the beginning of the process; none of us knew that it would take four more years to get to our rough-cut premiere.[184]

In the follow-up email that Charlotte sent to the cast and crew, she reminded everyone that we would start and end on time. We needed to establish a standard of quasi-professionalism from the very beginning. We were amateur filmmakers, but many of us were professionals in other industries, or other media. Consider professionalism versus amateurism. We acknowledged our status as amateurs in some ways, but also tried to institute professional protocols in other respects. We needed to act "as-if" the shoot was professional, but in a way that was relaxed and unpaid, decidedly a difficult needle to thread. Our main concern at the beginning of the process was that an actor drop out before all their scenes were shot, and such "as-if" professionalism helped to establish a sense in the film's community that we would certainly *finish* the project, and that anyone who quit would be quitting on the entire community. That tone worked.[185] We were playing at professional, but we were playing at it together.

On May 6, 2011, we had our second day of shooting. We used a dormitory at the University of Maryland. It was finals week, and a student member of the cast allowed us to use his room to shoot his scenes. We shot late on a Friday night. Our goal was to finish scenes 55, 56, and 57. We had them in the can around midnight.[186] In the planning for the shoots, Charlotte became prop master. She compiled the list of

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[184] Appendix 21
[185] Appendix 22
[186] Appendix 23

props we would need for these days and asked the cast to search their garages and bring whatever they could.[187]

On May 14 and 15, 2011 we had our third and fourth days of shooting. These would be the worst performances technically, and many flaws in our shooting technique from these days show up in the final version of the film. We made mistakes on these days that marked the film as a less-than professional production. Reshoots were not possible in many cases: either we could not get back into borrowed dorm rooms, we could not bring the cast back together, or we could not afford to rent props again. When making errors, we did not know what we did not know. We were learning as we went, often not discovering our errors until a few *years* later when we edited the film together. Our worst shot scenes appear at the 3-minute and 10-minute marks in the movie. One in DuPont circle, the other when we first introduce Kraig during his move from D.C. to St. Louis. But despite the technical problems, we could not reshoot or cut the content. Mistakes made in multiple technical aspects of the audio and video mark these scenes as amateur. The colors are soft, focus is off, the whites are blooming and much of the audio recorded on these days is hollow and sounds as if the microphone was not pointed correctly at the actors. Another scene recorded on this day—head shaving between Joni and Roman at the 44-minute mark—was nearly lost completely when the SDHC memory cards were not formatted correctly and the files exploded (for want of a more accurate term) in the file tree. The two Directors of Photography who worked on these shoots would leave the film shortly thereafter and we would have to recruit their replacements the University of

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[187] Appendix 24

Maryland student body. These scenes may be the most important in the project as they make clear the pitfalls inherent in playing at professionalism. Audiences do not understand why a scene does not look or sound right; they will simply find themselves less engaged in the content. As a television professional, I recognized the errors, but as an amateur filmmaker, I did not know enough to correct my errors on location. That kind of foresight is what makes a pro.

As the days, months, and years dragged on, people became tense. Tension on a professional film set is common and not too much of a problem. People are typically on a set for several reasons including their paycheck. Like with actors, when a crewmember is collecting a salary they will tolerate a certain level of stress before they blow up. We did not have that luxury. These blown shoots were the emotional low-point of our entire production. The film could have collapsed, with the scenes edited into short YouTube clips and the community abandoned. Many no-budget digital films die in this way. Ours survived, mostly due to Charlotte's efforts to build a community around the project. Hurt feelings forgiven, lost crewmembers were replaced, and the cast stayed put.

On May 16, 2011, Charlotte sent an email to everyone who had been on those stressful sets. She apologized for seeming "a bit edgy," but just wanted to "make sure that those scenes get shot and get us out at a decent hour." She was adept at both acknowledging the problem and reminding everyone that she respected their time. It was a successful message and the team held together with a few defections. Producing is arduous work with many logistical details to control including schedules, gear, and food. This was one of the very few near-collapse moments in the

process, but ultimately, we stuck with the full partnership in the production. Going back through my field notes, I was surprised to read about this level of anxiety. I had simply forgotten it a few years later; I did not have time to dwell on the emotion and frustration. I was in the first year of my Ph.D., working full time and making this film. It just vanished into the past. In retrospect, I am glad that tension did not derail the production. As I finished the edit for online distribution in March 2017, those problematic scenes were among the final that couldn't be fixed. This was a continual learning process; I worked to fix those colors myself, alone in the edit suite for the last 200 hours of work. A former student of mine spent many hours in 2016 cleaning the audio, but then he too had to leave the production, Charlotte went back to work, and at the end I was left alone. Today those scenes are as good as they are going to get, still though deeply flawed. The film is "finished," with mistakes covered over as well as possible given the constraints of time, skill, and budget.

On two Sundays in June 2011, we had soothed over hurt feelings, replaced technical staff, and shot several scenes. We had originally planned the June scenes for May 22 but had to postpone for nearly a month because of scheduling conflicts. Despite the delay, this was our most productive period to-date on location, and a complete turnaround from May. It was invigorating, an emotional reward for pushing through our troubles. We felt like a real-film set and were making progress. We shot all the St. Louis and Washington, D.C. interior apartment scenes, many of the scenes in Michael and Cassandra's home and at DuPont Circle, and half of the closing café scenes. We shot the other half of those scenes, the cutaways, a year later with an as-yet uncast actor, and then edited the two takes together a year after that. After these

June 2011 weekend shoots, we were starting to feel like we had a movie. It had taken nine months, but we finally had approximately 35% of the film shot. (See Appendix 25 for Charlotte's email plan for the June 19 shoot).

Storyboarding

Most directors use storyboards to communicate their vision of the film to the crew. I underestimated the need to do this, wanting a naturalistic set that appeared to look as if it was a lived space. I wanted the blocking to be organic after rehearsing scenes with the actors, and I wanted a film made differently than is done in Hollywood. Our first DP Elizabeth is a professional TV camerawoman and she expected storyboards. On June 13, 2011, she sent me an email[188] suggesting the use of software. She wrote, "it's a good idea to make little storyboards of each scene so that you have a vision of how the cut version of the movie will look, line for line." Her argument emphasized that storyboards are helpful "for blocking and planning for lighting," and that is was necessary to streamline shooting, so we did not spend too much time on "coverage" shots. Elizabeth also argued that storyboarding is a tool for actors who want to know when they will be on camera. I came to see that she was right and changed my workflow to accommodate. Even drawn poorly, they helped me to find a vision and convey that vision on set. Even with this change, however, I focused mostly on the words, the jokes, and the acting, sometimes to my advantage and other times to my detriment. The lesson I drew is that professional standards ignored on a DIY set can be detrimental to workflow. The storyboard is a marker of professionalism, and without that marker, participants question the workflow. The

[188] See Appendix 28

marker serves to keep momentum. I assumed that clearly articulating my vision would be enough, but that ignored techniques and approaches found in the traditional world of filmmaking.

We shot very little material for the rest of 2011, scheduling a single day shooting b-roll on October 7, 2011 but could not pull the cast together for the rest of the year. Even small scenes required people who wanted to go on vacation, go back to school, or focus on other projects. So, other than those very productive weekends in May and June, we finished the year on a long hiatus with approximately 35% to 40% of the film shot.

Call for Staff

At the six-month mark—ironically, just as we were about to enter this long, slow period—we started to panic about volunteer staffing. It was clear that we would need more people if we were going to hold the production together. I placed an advertisement in the TDPS newsletter at the University of Maryland on May 6, 2011:

> Hand Spun Films / Vibrancy Media are looking for Production Assistants
> Costumers/Set designers/props for a Feature Film shoot "Aspirin for the
> Masses" taking place in and around DC/UMD this summer - shooting started
> last weekend and will continue nights and weekends through late August.
> Positions are unpaid, but will come with on-screen credit, and IMDB Credit.
> Contact: charlt@vibrancymedia.com

I also began teaching my first film class at UMD that summer and recruited my former students (after the class had finished) to work on the movie.

Three of those students joined in 2012 and helped to a great degree over the long shooting schedule. All three became professionals in the film industry just a few years later. Matt Creeger became our primary Director of Photography after Dariki and Elizabeth dropped out. Peter Garofalo became co-DP and acted as Erich in the film, and Hectorlynn Wour worked as a PA on a couple of shoots that summer before moving to Los Angeles to work as a producer/business manager in Hollywood. It is laughable in retrospect that I wrote that we would be finished shooting by late that summer. Even at this point, with all the delays and the number of crew people who had left the film, I still believed that we could work as efficiently as a professional film set. That was naive in the extreme. We were not learning the lessons placed in front of us. Hope seemed to trump reason. In fact, it was not until I started drafting this text that I was able to frame the workflow properly. Professional production is more efficient because of the professional need to finish a project, turn a profit, and move onto the next moneymaking opportunity. This amateur project had no reason to finish quickly; the footage could sit on a hard drive for as long as it took—and it took several years.

Production 2012

We spent the early months of 2012 still in hiatus, and during that time I started searching for an editor. We were still playing at professionalism, and I was still hoping to finish without having to spend any more money. I first approached an amateur editor, a student at UMD, hoping that she would be interested in gaining experience. She took my drives (thankfully, they were copies) and disappeared. I never saw her or the drives again (I think she went to graduate school in Michigan). I

learned from this experience that not every aspect of filmmaking could be done "no cost." Editing is labor-intensive and takes hundreds (if not thousands) of hours for a single film. Nobody wants to do that work free. This is perhaps the best reason why editors have such a strong union, their skills are in high demand, and they can be more fairly compensated working as a collective (the Editors Guild is part of IATSE).

In February 2012 we received a tremendous emotional boost when the Beverly Hills Film Festival made the screenplay an "Official Selection." This award came at a time when the production could have collapsed, and no one would have blinked—not even me. We had been "off" for almost eight months. I was considering releasing the shot material as a short film and moving on. The volunteers were out of touch. This award reminded us that we had a good script that we could still turn into a good movie. The boost would prove fruitful. Once we hit the Spring/Summer of 2012, we shot another 20%, leaving us 60% done and looking forward to a fall finish.

On April 9, 2012, Charlotte sent an email to the entire cast and crew with our schedule to the finish line. In this email, she mapped out how we would complete the final 40% of shooting that summer—our naivety knew few boundaries. Her plan included a shoot every weekend in May. If we had been able to work at this pace sooner, we would have finished the film in 2011, as originally hoped.[189] This is the first time that we felt like a "real" movie production team shooting at the correct pace. Charlotte called for morning, afternoon, and late day shoots during that four-week rush. Surprisingly for an all-volunteer team, we met her schedule. By the end of May 2012, we had shot 98% of the film. We immediately entered a four-month hiatus,

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[189] See Appendix 15

once again finding that the last shoot was impossible to schedule during the summer months.

By September 2012 were ready to wrap and had started to complete the scenes for various actors. Michael and Cassandra shot their last scene on Charlotte's boat on September 23, 2012 and then left the production. The actor who played Michael would develop cancer a few months later, and he got very sick just as the film wrapped. He went through extensive cancer treatment at about the same time the production would enter another prolonged period of inactivity, and as we were searching unsuccessfully for an edit plan. The cancer went into remission. Our actor was cancer free in attendance at our first preview screening in December 2014, two-plus years after we completed shooting the film. Post-production lasted an inordinately long time because we had no budget to pay the high cost of labor-intensive video editing.

Post Production 2011-2017

When we wrapped up our shooting schedule in September 2012, I had no idea that it would take two and a half years to complete a rough edit of the film. We had shot close to a terabyte of video and had edited none of that material. Eighty-two scenes, hundreds of shots, thousands of takes, and we had no one to cut the raw material into a finished film. I attempted to edit myself in September 2012 and by June 2013 I had cut a total of two scenes. By December 2013 I had gotten through nine scenes. Clearly, I was going to have to hire an editor. I ended up paying $3,500 to finish the rough cut between December 2013 and March 2015. It was at this point in March 2015 that I could begin entering the film into festivals. I would work with a

second editor in 2016 to clean up the audio to meet professional standards, and then I worked alone in 2017 (my editing skills had grown stronger from working with others). In March 2017, I submitted a color graded film for QC after I had worked 200 hours alone to "grade" the film. I worked alone to "finish" the film because everyone else involved in the project had understandably returned to their real lives.

In all, our post-production would stretch another 32 months past the preview screening in December 2014. Our rough-cut première was on May 15, 2015, nearly four-and-a-half years after we started out first rehearsals. On August 2, 2017, we wrapped the entire production when Amazon Prime acquired the license and posted to their site.[190]

The production of a film is no easy task. For this little no-budget movie we needed 50 people to give us their skills. Digital filmmaking is a democratic medium, and anyone can do it. But because of our desire to stretch the boundaries of amateurism we took on a much more challenging task than I ever imagined. In this chapter, I attempted to present a small part of the hundreds of pages of field notes I took during this process. It was daunting, and I will never again work in this exact way, but once I finished the film and started collecting festival selections and prizes, the difficult parts of production seemed easily justified.

When I embarked on *Aspirin for the Masses*, I assumed that "professionalism" in film was merely a tool used by moneyed interests to control the production process as a means of insuring an appropriate return on investment. I considered professional tactics as being old-fashioned workflows worthy of the trash bin. I now hold a more

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[190] https://www.amazon.com/gp/video/detail/B073V7BGSW/ref=dv_web_wtls_list_pr_3

nuanced opinion of professionalism after making the film and then framing my field notes. Ashford (2016) discusses the hiring of new media producers by large old media entities. As a result, the giants are subsuming alternate workflows to some degree. According to her reporting, Vice Media has received two rounds of investment from Disney, while NBC Universal and Comcast hold stakes in BuzzFeed and Vox Media. "Leaders are investing in unicorns to limit disruption, open up new distribution channels and capture new technology, as well as to retain customers and access new ones."[191] This arrangement is far from ideal from the perspective of DIY filmmaking. Not long ago, the films broadcast by Vice Media seemed as "outsider" as my own; today they seem to be the coolest of insiders. The lure of professional workflows coupled with the promise of big funding is a powerful draw.[192]

Control

I see in filmmakers born between 1965 to 1985 a yearning to work like Orson Welles or Stanley Kubrick even in circumstances where there are no funds to do so. These and other famous filmmakers of the past were institutional men (primarily white, rich and privileged). They controlled large teams at the behest of enormous pools of money. Filmmakers today do not have to be inside of an institution, named to a position of power to be able to work in a quasi-professional manner. Digital media tools allow freedom from institutional control, and with that the ability to make movies in whatever style one envisions without having to compromise to a bank, a studio or a powerful institution. This freedom has a cost nonetheless, and when there

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[191] Ashford, Holly. 2016. "Move over Millennials Enter Generation Z." *TVB Europe* 41-42. Film & Television Literature Index with Full Text, EBSCOhost (accessed January 18, 2017).
[192] You do not have a big budget to employ professionalism, but it is difficult to get pros to work free.

is very little budget, on-set contributors must be paid in some portion of on-set control. Ironically, that control wrested from the institution must be shared with the community. Directors who long for the *good old days* of the authoritarian director simply cannot employ that strategy in the current era, or their volunteers will find something better to do with their Saturday afternoons. Films in both the analogue and digital eras are community endeavors, requiring large pools of input from people with varied skill sets. A movie needs actors, writers, technicians. While the tools of production have gotten cheaper, the people who work with those tools must be paid in cash *or* in non-financial agency. As a first-time director in this new digital medium, I learned to *let go* of control. I came to accept "action" from anyone who wanted to call it out, with a simple letting go of the past, of pretense, of authoritarian visions. We built a community of Generation X filmmakers who came together for the years it took to create this project, and then simply went back to our lives.

Chapter 4: Live Performance of Festivals

Film festivals are important sites where ritualized behaviors transform filmmakers. I conducted research at festivals large and small, from the massive Cannes Film Festival to tiny festivals in Jakarta and Mammoth, California. I drew on conversations with film directors, screenwriters and actors who participated in these events around the globe, conducted field research, and once again engaged in auto-ethnography when our film was in competition. At all festivals, I find, performativity is a defining construct for filmmakers—especially when they make the famed walk down the "red carpet." Here, the body of the artist – amateur or pro, DIY or Hollywood – is on display on the ultimate film showcases for spectacle.

Andre Bazin (1955), writing of the Cannes Film Festival, described the red-carpeted stairway at the *Cannes Palais des Festivals et des Congrès* as a space where ordinary filmmakers are transmuted into gods through a kind of "secular ritual." Of all the worldwide film festivals, Cannes is the most significant—more important to the worldwide film business and cinematic art form even than the Sundance Film Festival or festivals in Los Angeles and New York. London's *Guardian* Newspaper wrote of Cannes in 2016, "Cannes is a fantasy land. It's full of celebrities and chancers, performers and posers, and overlooked at all times by 500 mounted cameras. Everybody's on screen, everyone's being watched."[193]

I employ a kinship diagram below between film festivals at various positions in the hierarchy. At the top are Cannes and Sundance, followed by huge international

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[193] https://www.theguardian.com/film/2016/may/15/cannes-film-festival-2016-report-cafe-society-i-daniel-blake-money-monster (accessed 3/31/2017)

festivals in Edinburgh, Toronto, Berlin, Venice, and well-known fringe festivals

SXSW, Tribeca, Slamdance. In the third tier are nearly all the other festivals – more

than 4000 – that host events in nearly every community in the world. A fourth tier can

be reserved for closed festivals in academic settings, such as the Communication

Department student film festival at the University of Maryland, UMD

COMMpetition), and other small festivals in their first year, that haven't yet proven

viability.[194] The map below will prove useful to those not familiar with the festivals.

It runs top to bottom with city-based events on one branch and themed festivals on

the other:

Cannes   and   Sundance

Edinburgh, Toronto, Berlin, Venice   SXSW, Tribeca, Slamdance

Beverly Hills, Nice, Cork   Horror, Gay & Lesbian, Jewish, $100

Cannes Underground, STIFF   UMD COMMpetition, CinErotic[195]
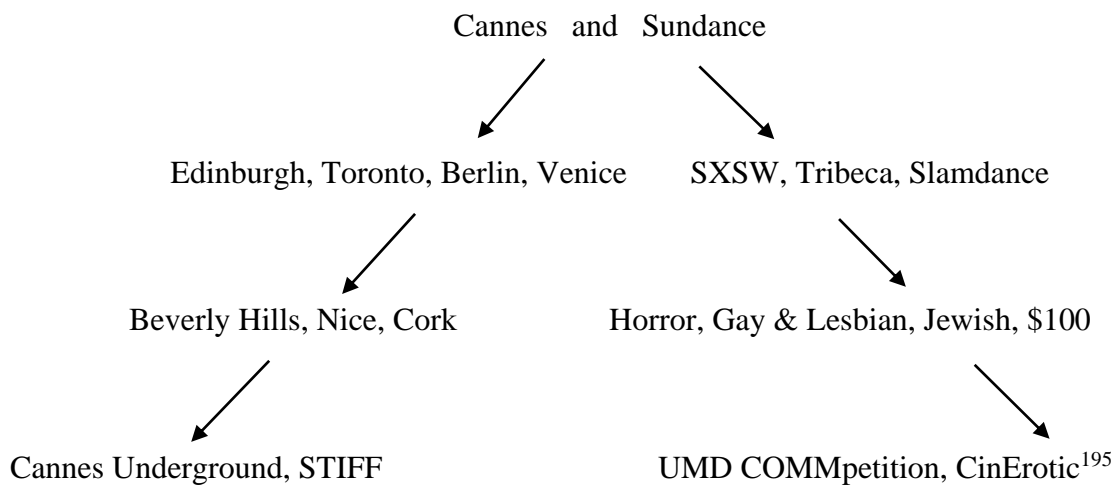
These are loosely grouped. Some festivals would appear on multiple branches such as

the (tier three) San Francisco International LGBTQ Film Festival as it is both city-

based and themed. It difficult to fit 4000+ film festivals into a four-tier tree, the

purpose is to offer a loose hierarchy. In general, Cannes, Sundance and Toronto

present the best films of the year from Hollywood, Indie producers and breakout DIY

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filmmakers. All three screen feature films and shorts. Tier-two festivals screen the same kinds of films but with a different mix geographically that includes the best of local films and production entities. The third-tier festivals present many more fringe filmmakers, features and shorts that are hidden gems, handmade, DIY, and lower budget. The most obscure of the tier-three festivals present DIY primarily. The fourth tier are for closed communities, and for first time festivals sorting out their identity. Many first-time festivals do not repeat a second year due to financial considerations or overwhelming workloads.

I draw on my practice-based experience attending film festivals over the past decade as both a filmmaker myself, and a researcher of Performance Studies. This chapter is structured as follows:

1) Film Festival competition categories

2) Major International Festivals, beginning with Cannes, followed by Sundance and Toronto,

3) DIY Fringe Festivals,

4) Websites that connect filmmakers to festivals, and

5) The red-carpet as a site of ritual and performativity

I begin with an examination of film festival competition categories, while also looking at film as a business, and film as an art form.

Antonio Falduto (2016) notes that all film festivals, to maintain a "central role" as cultural events, must constantly renew their formulas, programs, and formats, which has resulted in bringing thousands of "outsider" filmmakers into the festival fold. According to Falduto, the pageantry of a typical Cannes "In Competition" film

premiere feels much like "a procession of kings and emperors from a different era." Movie stars pass across the red carpet through a sea of news cameras and reporters, who shout compliments and questions from the periphery. Stars ascend the staircase in designer gowns and tuxedos as they head to their screenings. At the Cannes Marketplace, for instance, I walked the convention floor as a researcher participant. At the Cannes Film Festival, I met with big names in the film business, attempted to setup meetings with major international studios, marketed our movie, and took field notes. Throughout the chapter, I report on my experience and findings.

After Cannes, focus turns to the Sundance and Toronto film festivals, before moving on to discuss fringe festivals in some detail. Fringe festivals are the places where nearly all no-budget movies find an audience, accolades, and cultural capital. I explain how a handful of websites act as gatekeepers to festival entry. These digital meet-up spaces are facilitators rather than barriers to entry and allow fringe producers to interact with fringe festivals and effectively bridge distances of thousands of miles and vast cultural spaces. The success of many film festivals, both large and small, has been enabled by the broader digital revolution that allows artists from around the world to connect and collaborate with each other. The online process where filmmakers and film festivals connect—a kind of match.com environment in which films find the festivals that best suit their aesthetic construct—allows like-minded individuals and institutions to find each. The global reach of these online meeting spaces means that films can find an audience in unexpected places around the world, which creates new film markets and gives public voice to a new class of "outsider" auteurs.

Finally, I conclude by examining the phenomenon of the red carpet through the lenses of performativity, ritual, and liminal space. I compare the two principal ways in which fringe filmmakers interact with their audience—digital postings vs. film festival red carpet appearances—and find the latter to be more rewarding due to the human connection in a lived space that it entails.

For the filmmaker, whether fringe or insider, competing at Cannes and walking the red carpet represent a business and artistic milestone. Competing at Cannes almost guarantees a measure of market prominence. An even bigger prize, however, is the cultural capital that comes from competing and winning at this renowned festival. An award at Cannes marks a movie as perhaps the year's most interesting—a must see, an artistic triumph—and, due to the newfound cultural status, as big business. Falduto asserts that a film's return on investment at Cannes is ultimately measured by the cultural "presence" and "return of image" the festival generates, a prospect no less important to DIY digital filmmakers than their more mainstream counterparts.

10,000 Festivals and Counting

Researcher Stephen Follows tracks film festivals.[196] Affiliated with the British Film Institute, an organization in London that awards the BAFTA, England's most prestigious film award (akin to an Academy Award's Oscar), Follows discovered that nearly 10,000 festivals have been held at least once since 1998. This is a sizeable number, but as Follows explains, many festivals occurred only once in that time frame. Anecdotally, the website Film Freeway listed 4300 affiliated active festivals as

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[196] https://stephenfollows.com/many-film-festivals-are-in-the-world/ (accessed 10/28/2015).

of August 2016, showing an expansion from 3000 affiliated festivals in October 2015, a better-than 30% growth over 10 months. Film Freeway does not represent every active film festival in the world, but just those that register with the service (our student film festival at the University of Maryland, for example, does not use Film Freeway to recruit filmmakers).[197] These numbers elucidate a recent surge in the number of festivals. As a filmmaker myself, I notice new festivals opening almost constantly. Based on my research and anecdotal evidence, I would say that Follows has in fact undercounted the number of festivals, and that the total number since 1998 might exceed 10,000, while the currently active festivals might significantly exceed the 4300 he claims.[198]

Follows also asserts the following:

- 39% of film festivals only ever run once

- 71% of film festivals screen short films and 52% screen feature films

- Half of all film festivals run for less than 7 days

- North America hosts 70% of the world's film festivals

- October is the busiest month, with five times as many festivals as December.

In my experience, film festivals run for less than seven days because most of film festival filmmakers are fringe producers who bring self-financed projects. The exception to this, obviously, are the films that air at the massive international festivals. These festivals run longer, have more money, and show bigger budget films.

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[197] We use a student newsletter, email blasts and our website to solicit entries.
[198] Follows claims that his methodology undercounted by an estimated 8-10%.

Film Festival Competition Categories

From my research, I have determined that the most essential element in a DIY filmmaker's journey from outsider to quasi-insider status in the industry is the participation at the film festival. Film festival performance is both text-based (the movie itself) and embodied (the performance by the filmmaker at the festival, including on the red carpet and at the festival marketplaces). My study examines the embodied aspects of film festival performance. From 2011 to 2016, I conducted site-specific research into film festival structure, both as a filmmaker (participant) and an observer. In addition to attending fringe festivals, I "walked the floor" at Cannes, stopping at hundreds of booths to shake hands, introduce our movie, and solicit a meeting. I attended parties and screenings, talking to distributors, sales agents, and filmmakers. In total, I visited more than a dozen festivals where I presented our work, participated in multiple marketplaces (i.e., sales meetings), and recorded observations about the ways in which other filmmakers and distributers showed their work and used these gatherings to conduct the business side of filmmaking. Throughout this chapter, I explore the film festival world, a space that is different from, but also modeled on, the red carpeted and sparkling celebrations of film we see on TV including the Oscars and the Golden Globe Awards.

A relatively new component of the film festival scene, "no-budget" DIY films is not often addressed in write-ups, whether journalistic or scholarly. To determine film categories, I relied on the Sundance Institute, which distinguishes between several broad types of film: U.S. and international, narrative and documentary, and feature and short. Sundance defines a U.S. based feature narrative film as being

longer than 50 minutes, being more than 50% financed from inside the U.S., and having "either scripted or improvisational fiction." Although I describe multiple categories in the dissertation to provide context, my research focuses on one category: films that self-finance with a budget of under $25,000 (a category not used by Sundance). In examining this category, I analyzed DIY aesthetics, under the assumption that "cheap" films have an identifiable look and interacted with DIY filmmakers to discuss their projects and careers. "No-budget," "new-media," or "digital" are categories in festival competition used to categorize DIY cinema; ascertaining exactly what no-budget filmmaking is, however, was a significant problem that I faced in this research. I engaged in discourse analysis to draw out distinctions in meaning among the above terms and the below categories, and to determine when categories implied budgetary limitations.

See the table below for a description of how these categories compare with others in festival competition.

Table 8

Film Festival Competition Categories

Festival Name	Competition Category	Budget Constraints
Sundance Institute	NEW FRONTIER FEATURES (5-6 U.S. and International Feature Films) The New Frontier category celebrates experimentation and the convergence of film, art, and new media technology as an emerging hotbed for cinematic innovation, highlighting work that pushes the limits of traditional aesthetics and structures of filmmaking.[199]	None listed
United States Super 8 Film and Digital Video Festival	The festival encourages any genre (animation, documentary, experimental, fiction, personal, etc.), but the work must have predominantly originated on Super 8mm/8mm film or Digital video or 8mm video formats.	None listed
Slamdance[200]	Eligible for our Narrative Features competition are features over 40 minutes in length, made by first-time narrative feature directors, with a budget under $1 million and no distribution.	Under $1,000,000
Cannes Independent Film Festival	No-Budget Feature: 50 to 180 minutes in length. Narrative.	Under 25,000 Euro
No-Budget Film Festival	Exact parameters of competition not listed. 100 films entered into competition. 2013 was the fourth annual event.[201]	"All entries must be made for zero dollars"[202]

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[199] https://www.withoutabox.com/03film/03t_fin/03t_fin_fest_01over.php?festival_id=1375 "For the 2013 Festival, Slamdance received over 5,000 total submissions. We program about 100 films total, with under 30 features and 70 shorts screening in the main competition. Competition is incredibly fierce given our limited space. However, our programmers are committed to the hunt for the films with the most original vision."

[200] Slamdance is a well-known alternative to Sundance. It advertises itself as truly-independent. http://showcase.slamdance.com/#Film-Festival

[201] http://nobudgetfilmfest.com/2012-films/

[202] http://nobudgetfilmfest.com/call-for-entries/

These category distinctions are important in determining filmmaker status – outsider or insider. They indicate position in the hierarchy; tell us whether the walk along the red carpet is both a moment of identity creation and steps to enormous financial reward.

Ritual

Filmmakers embrace ritual as a means of forming identity. The film festival has a ritualized structure, and at the end of this ritual—the red carpet walked, the film screened, the audience greeted afterward during a Q&A—the filmmaker has passed through a liminal space. The ritualized acts occur in a specific order and have precise roles in the making of a filmmaker's identity. Without this ritual, the film is merely a video, an anonymous screening in a movie theatre, or a posting to an online platform.

> Erving Goffman described the role ritual plays in identity formation:
> In our society the character one performs and one's self are somewhat equated… The self then, as a performed character, is not an organic thing that has a specific location, whose fundamental fate is to be born, to mature, and to die; it is a dramatic effect.[203]

Liminality and frame, flow and experience allow understanding of the anthropology of performance. Victor Turner (1969) asserts that liminal experiences, including rites of passage take place after a stage of ritualized separation and before re-incorporation back into the social order. Film scholar Cynthia Felando (2017) employs liminality

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[203] Erving Goffman, *The Goffman Reader*, 23-24.

theory to refer to an 'in-between' stage in which identities and relationships are in transition.[204]

The work of Diana Taylor helps to frame this discussion of the ritual aspects of red carpet performativity. Taylor provides an analysis of the political role and the emotional and cultural impact of performance and the performative. Her work considers how the repertoire of embodied performance practice and memory asks us to reconsider text, both historical and contemporary. Taylor writes, "By taking performance seriously as a system of learning, storing, and transmitting knowledge, [it] allows us to expand what we understand by "knowledge."[205]

Filmmakers choose their film festival applications carefully, and the festival vets those applications to select the few it will allow to participate in their rituals. In a film festival, the performative utterance is read aloud at the awards ceremony ("and the winner is . . ."). You could argue, however, that *Official Selection* is the more important ritualized utterance. To be included in the festival is the crucial marker. An Official Selection opens-up the red carpet. To win in a category is emotionally fulfilling and an asset in marketing the film, impressing friends online, or selling a filmmaker's future projects—and the trophies look great on a shelf. However, "winner" is not the key phrase. An invitation onto the red carpet in Milan means more than a trophy. The red carpet is a life-changing ritualized space, while the trophy serves primarily as the marker of that liminal event. Susan Blum in *Making Sense of*

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[204] Cynthia Felando, "The Centre Cannot Hold: The Beach and Liminality," Short *Film Studies* 2017 Apr; 7 (1): 45-48.
[205] Taylor, 16

Language writes of language as referential, indexical, and/or pragmatic.[206] This distinction at the heart of performance and identity studies, illuminates film festivals where nearly every action, every question, every printed document, even sitting in an audience for another filmmaker's work, can be read as performative and ritualized.

That new identity is archived in digital space through postings to Facebook or YouTube. Looking to the red carpet one can see performance and the archive in play. These are moments captured, even created for, the digital space on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Exploring the interplay between embodied, digital, and private display of one's digital journey provides insight into what it means to be a filmmaker. The display of the film in public while the filmmaker is present is a performative event. While the film is media, the filmmaker himself or herself is embodied, and an appearance by the filmmaker constitutes a type of performance.

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[206] Blum, 350

Photograph 13

The Cannes Red Carpet, May 15, 2016

Lacking a festival screening, digital distribution of film work is alienating.

Hits are tabulated online but they never convey a performed and performative

connection with an audience that the festival provides. I detail the digital distribution

of one of my digital short films, *The New Burlesque*, a film that was included in the

2011 Mountain Film Festival, where I was present. That single night in Mammoth,

California has more meaning than the thousands of online screenings counted by

YouTube. One can analyze website metadata and cast a darkened digital gaze back

toward an online audience, but one cannot truly know a digital audience. The two

distribution experiences, online and in-person, are fundamentally different for the

digital filmmaker.

In 2010, before any film festival screenings, I posted my digital short *The New Burlesque* on YouTube. The site collects demographic data about the viewership of every posting. For example, I can see the date of every screening, the country of viewing, the gender breakdown of the audience (if they were signed into the YouTube or a Google page), and the path the viewer took to get to my video, which typically comes from a YouTube suggestion, a link from my video landing page, or an external site. A considerable number of the hits for this short movie came from the website of the dancing troop Sugar Shack Burlesque that I profiled in the documentary. My impression is that my viewership would increase on the nights after their live performances, as they would suggest to the audience that they could see more of the troop at their website's media page, which included a link to my film. I witnessed this happen at live performances for the group in 2010 and 2011. The views are broken down by country as follows:

Table 9

International Distribution[207]

Geography	Views
United States	3139
Germany	206
United Kingdom	163
Canada	132
Italy	102
France	99
Austria	76
Saudi Arabia	62
Netherlands	49

In all, there were approximately 5,000 viewings of the film from 2010–2014. The

film screened in 80 countries internationally, including once in South Africa, Estonia,

Costa Rica, Azerbaijan, and the Congo. This audience is larger than any audience I

have had for my work at traditional film festivals. The audience is global in scope but

faceless, existing only as a number to me as the producer/director. It is not the elite

and site-specific audience at film festivals, and yet the higher the hits go, the better I

feel I have done in performing for that audience. Nevertheless, I still do not know

who this audience is; there is no human connection in the metadata. The comment

section, for example does not offer the same level of demographic metadata regarding

commentators that the video tab does, certainly by design. Comment sections are

useful, but for this film were so few that they provide anecdotal information but not

much more. The traffic data for *The New Burlesque* is as follows:

[207] Data tabulated in Dec 2014.

Table 10

Traffic Data

Traffic source type	Views	Estimated minutes Watched
UNKNOWN EMBEDDED	2,556	398
YOUTUBE-RELATED	700	158
UNKNOWN MOBILE OR DIRECT	574	135
YOUTUBE SEARCH	480	128
EXTERNAL URL	133	19
YOUTUBE OTHER PAGE	75	0
GOOGLE SEARCH	44	18
YOUTUBE CHANNEL	35	0
SUBSCRIBER	13	1

This data is significant precisely because it is the only way to *know* this audience until I go to a festival, walk down a red carpet to greet them, engage with them in a Q&A after the screening. At a festival, I am in the room as my work screens, and I see faces as I speak to the audience from a podium. The connection is human. In the digital environment, however, I must accept that the audience is a mass of numbers and little else until I see them live at a festival, for when else can a DIY filmmaker see an audience for their small film. My gaze backward to my audience is embodied in festival, or its digital online, or its nonexistent. This is fundamentally dissatisfying and an artistic dead-end. Absent huge financial returns—something that only happens when hits number into the millions—this is an arguably pointless exercise. The hung laurel in my library means more to me personally than the digital viewership count or the country-by-country breakdown of the data. Why is this? Why do a few faces in a ballroom in Mammoth mean more than an audience hundreds of times the size online? The answer must lie in the lasting value of the performed moment, the now

felicitous performative mantle of filmmaker that I can wear proudly and see beaming from my wall anytime I pass by the archived laurel.

International vs. Fringe Festivals – Size Matters

A film festival is a place for receiving and showing off laurels. It is the site of a lived ritual important to nearly every artist working in the medium. In this space, a film is more than a poster or a video online. Here it is the text that allows the filmmaker to shake hands at a podium with an awards presenter, to be photographed on the red carpet. In this section, I will explore festivals by category, beginning with the biggest and then moving into the fringe festivals where I found a community that welcomed our work. The huge international film festivals include Sundance in Utah, Cannes in France and the Toronto Film Festival in Canada. The lower-tier festivals I attended include festivals in Nice, France, Berlin, Germany, San Francisco, California and Jakarta, Indonesia.

Cannes – Celebrity, Culture, and Commerce

The Cannes Film Festival, founded in the 1930's and relaunched in 1946 after World War Two, is much older than Sundance and has traditionally been a home for the best in international filmmaking. Cannes takes place at the *Palais des Festivals et des Congrès* in May each year with the Cannes Marketplace attached to the screenings and red carpet. In 2015, I attended the Festival and Marketplace. Cannes is glamorous; it has big names in attendance and is the place where film as a business reaches its apex. Million-dollar handshakes are made onboard yachts in the nearby harbor, stars walk the red carpet and swim at the beaches, and deals are made every

223

day—if not every hour—in the Marketplace, a three-floor exhibition space where the

biggest studios in internationals film buy from and sell movies to distributors. Smaller

players work in booths next to the giants, buying and selling smaller films. No-budget

producers, like me, walk the floor looking for a sales agent to market their digital

product. This is the New York Stock Exchange of the movie industry. Being present

and being seen in the Marketplace is important because it is a mark of stature,

indicating that a filmmaker has arrived, has been vetted, awarded a pass.[208]

Photograph 14

The Cannes Film Festival May 16, 2015

The Marketplace is an important location at the festival. The red carpet, the press areas, and the cinemas are for pageantry and art. The Marketplace, however, is for commerce. It is the place where financiers and producers make film projects happen; it is the future of next year's art, screenings, and pageantry. In some ways, it is the more important space. Without these meetings, without the exchange of ideas and scripts, without the construction of film teams, big-budget projects would never happen. I spent two days walking this floor; it is in fact multiple halls with tens-of-thousands of feet of purple-carpeted space (the red carpet reserved for the screenings). The halls are broken up by geographic region: North America, Asia, Africa, and Europe; and by language, although English is the currency language in Cannes (ironically).

Cannes describes The Marché du Film Marketplace as "the most important event of the film industry and the meeting point of more than 11,000 professionals, including 3,200 producers, 2,300 distributors, 1,500 sellers, and 790 festival organizers."[209] In 2015, I tried to meet with all 2,300 distributors. I fell far short but learned a great deal about the business of filmmaking in those conversations, including presentation, pitch, negotiation and the performance of cool—I learned to act as if I belonged.

Deal-making yachts line the harbor. They are packed as tightly as parked cars on a New York City street. They are parked, in fact, as in "not moving" for the duration of the festival. They are floating offices, every-one worth tens or even hundreds of millions of dollars. Other harbors on the French Riviera have yachts, but

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[209] http://www.marchedufilm.com/en/lemarche (Accessed 5/13/16)

they also have boats, skiffs, and fishing vessels. It is impossible to disconnect the

yachts from the festival in Cannes. The Marketplace balcony stands sentinel over the

marina. From the balcony of the Palais the yachts fill your view, stretching from the

elite (parked most closely to the site) to those at the back of the harbor. They fill

every slip, all the space in the water. This is the film business in pure form. Even DIY

filmmakers these are important stages of career and status building. I attended the

2015 Marketplace with four other DIY filmmakers, each of us hoping to have that

conversation that changed the trajectory of our careers, each approaching booths

boldly to pursue business meetings and potential distribution or financing for current

and future projects.

Photograph 15

Yachts Parked outside of the Cannes Film Festival May 16, 2015

Walking back into the Marketplace from yacht parking, movie posters line every wall with seemingly every "named" celebrity from Seth Rogen to David Hasselhoff to Lorenzo Llamas.

As I approached booths, I first had to ascertain whether they were buyers or sellers. Many distributors use the first week of the Marketplace to sell movies and the second week to acquire new movies to sell in future markets. I started in the Middle East—an area I know well from my professional life—at the Israel booth. Set up by the Israeli government, this booth sells their film industry to international distributors and to production companies as a suitable location to shoot in the future. This business model tries to sell contemporary projects in the moment, looks forward to future projects, and looks backward to the films that did big business in the past. The Israel booth was large, but not too large. The receptionists were kind, but not interested in representing my film, or any non-Israeli film. Still, they did invite me to shoot in their country in the future. As a television professional—like many in the industry I consider film and television to be separate businesses—I have shot multiple television shows in Israel, but that was not germane to this conversation, so I did not bring it up. TV is not film, so it would not earn me bona-fides among Marketplace vendors. Film projects require status, the real social currency in Cannes, earned especially through significant casts and budgets.

Photograph 16

The Israel Sales Booth, Cannes Marketplace 2015

I approached the Studio Canal booth to inquire about film acquisition. Studio

Canal is the most important film producer in France. Their booth was elegant and

beautifully designed with meeting rooms housed behind bleached wood and glass.

The outside featured an approximately 380 square-foot poster of Michael

Fassbender's *Macbeth*. Supermodels with high heels and attitudes guarded the front

desk. I had my status as outsider confirmed quickly by the left receptionist at the

Studio Canal booth.

Do you have Sales Agents? No.

Do you acquire films? No.

Can I meet with a production executive? Do you have an appointment?

No. No.

That was that. I am proud that I approached the citadel even though I walked away with nothing to show from it—not even swag. I hold onto the belief that I will be on the other side of that glass someday, if not with our current film, then with another. That hope drives a great deal of my peers in the no-budget filmmaking community. This exchange confirmed the unbreakable divide between DIY cinema and film as commerce. DIY is community theatre, Cannes is Broadway. However, DIY projects do break through, and it is in this space that it typically happens.[210]

Cannes has evolved to include hundreds of low-budget digital filmmakers in its Short Film Corner, giving non-mainstream film artists a chance to experience international glitz. Even for filmmakers without a film in competition (a designation reserved for feature films), attending Cannes can be a momentous occasion and seminal career event. Filmmaker Jonathan Ryan's *Trivial Pursuit* was an Official Selection of the Cannes Film Festival's Short's Corner in 2013, although it did not complete in the feature films category. Jonathan spoke with me of identity, expectation, reality, and outcomes from attending the festival as a young filmmaker, despite not being at the center of the media melee. He told me that making the film was a wonderful experience, and that he enjoyed the process from start to finish (surprisingly not every filmmaker feels this way about their work).[211] Cannes for him, however, was a "real eye opener" because he was not in the upper tiers of directors at

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[210] See also the Wallerstein Semi-Periphery Model as a useful avenue of further theoretical framing. Wallerstein, I (1974) *The Modern World System*. New York, Academic Press.
[211] See Ortner for an extensive exploration of filmmakers who do not enjoy the craft of filmmaking but push themselves for the cultural and financial rewards.

the two-week event. 2013 was the year in which *Inside Llewyn Davis*, *Blue is the Warmest Color*, and *Nebraska* swept the awards and absorbed the lion share of the spotlight.[212] Jonathan walked the red carpet, although not when the press was active, and his trip went unheralded by the media. He posted his own red-carpet photos to social media, so for him as with all filmmakers in Cannes, performativity was still at play, nonetheless.[213] Still, he described the festival as being "almost overwhelming," and said it was highly valuable to his career. It turned out to be a "networking workshop" where he learned the language of the film business from meeting with other attendees. Ultimately, he was able to turn this event into a career in television: shortly after attending Cannes, Discovery Channel hired him as an intern; today he is a Production Coordinator for *Shark Week*, where his team's work is seen around the world.

There is a third component to Cannes, the parties. The world press celebrates Cannes studio parties. *Hollywood Reporter* estimates that 200,000 people attend the Cannes Film Festival annually. Celebrities and producers present their work to rooms full of journalists over canapés and champagne. After days of walking the Marketplace floor, I talked my way into the Weinstein Company Cannes party for their 2015 slate of films. The Weinstein Company had leased the Majestic Hotel's *Salon Croisette* for the event. This hotel, directly across the street from the Cannes festival, lists its most expensive suites at $37,500 per night during the fortnight, and notes that "For the cost of a $25 vodka tonic, anyone can sit at the famed bar

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[212] http://www.imdb.com/event/ev0000147/2013 (Accessed 4/5/2017)
[213] The photos posted to Instagram can be just as meaningful as press coverage in some ways, as social postings represent embodied presence at the event, whether the moment was captured by an AP photographer or a friend's iPhone.

Fouquet… and be guaranteed that guests such as Johnny Depp, Jude Law, Monica

Bellucci and Gerard Depardieu will walk by."[214] At this meeting, Harvey Weinstein

cracked jokes, talked up his stars Jake Gyllenhaal and Alicia Vikander (then an

unknown actor in an unknown film, The Weinstein Company's *The Danish Girl).*

Weinstein claimed with great bravado that Vikander would soon be a star. Within

months, she received two academy award nominations and a win for *The Danish*

Girl.[215]

Photograph 17

Alicia Vikander holding her 2016 Academy Award[216]

I stood feet away from Vikander at the party unable to get close enough to discuss *Ex*

Machina, her other exceptional performance of 2015. I was able to converse briefly

with Weinstein to discuss purchase of *Aspirin for the Masses*. Weinstein was

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[214] Dana Kennedy, *Hollywood Reporter*, 5/18/2012, Vol. 418 Issue 17, p56-57
[215] This meeting took place before the world heard of the sexual assault allegations labeled against Weinstein by many of the female stars in his films.
[216] Photo Courtesy Getty Images

uninterested until I asserted the film cost only $500 to shoot, that it was a pure-profit opportunity. He connected me with a VP of The Weinstein Company to send the link. Nothing came of that email, but I was in a shared space with the hottest young star in Hollywood and one of the biggest moguls. That was an experience that I could only have had at an international film festival, and one *I* could not have had without access to cheap digital cameras. The digital camera was the key that opened this world to me as an outsider filmmaker. The world has come to see Weinstein's corruption. It is no accident that I was met with a closed door, and in the past that lack of access would have meant the end of the line for our film. But in the current era, the film was made and distributed without a major mogul or a studio.

Photograph 18

Meeting Harvey Weinstein at the Cannes Film Festival, 2015[217]

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[217] This was a few years before Harvey Weinstein was fired from his own production company amid sexual harassment allegations.

What is the significance of this chance encounter with the man who before scandal brought him down was Hollywood's biggest producer? More than just stargazing, the digital camera and on-line distribution allowed a breaking down of invisible walls. I was a producer with a credential. That was enough to get into the party at the Salon. Ultimately, I did not have success with Weinstein, but a year later, our film was back at Cannes, represented in the 2016 Cannes Marketplace by Altar Entertainment of West Hollywood.[218] The yearly industry meetings at Cannes, Sundance Toronto, and Santa Monica form the backbone of the film distribution business; it is here that deals are made to sell independent and studio productions for distribution around the world. In the end, the cheapest feature film ever made found a business partner at Cannes.

Sundance, Americas Biggest Film Festival

Film, a business built from an art form, thrives at huge international festivals. The biggest festivals trade in cultural and financial capital that reaches far beyond the filmmaking community into the consciousness of journalists, academics, and casual filmgoers. Sundance takes place in January each year in Utah. It is widely acknowledged as the preeminent American international film festival. The festival embraces the Indie film movement—films with less famous actors, lower budgets, and non-studio outsider status—and has led to the discovery of numerous important filmmakers over the past three decades. Founded in 1985, the initial iteration of Sundance included *Blood Simple,* the first feature from the Coen brothers. Also screened were Roland Joffe's *The Killing Fields* (later an Academy Award Winner), and Jim Jarmusch's *Stranger than Paradise.* This festival and these films mark an

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[218] This name was changed per a contractual NDA restriction.

important milestone in the American Independent film movement. This is serious, professional filmmaking, labeled independent by film journalists and scholars because many of the films were made outside of the major studio system and with capital from outside traditional Hollywood funding sources (See Ortner, 2013 and Bordwell/Thompson, 2010).

The work screened at Sundance in 1985 is important historically because it marked the beginning of a revolutionary shift in filmmaking practice, a shift not as upending as the transition to cheap digital cameras, but important as a step in a larger revolution. Anthropologist Sheri Ortner describes independent films as made with "small budgets" – one-million to eight-million dollars per film. This cost point allows the filmmaker to avoid studio money and control "and make the often-uncommercial films they want to make." Ortner's definition of "small budget" differs in scale and magnitude from mine: millions of dollars versus thousands of dollars. Nonetheless, Sundance's embrace of independent films paved the way for a new type of DIY filmmaker to achieve recognition for their work on the film festival stage.

The chart below considers budget range for the three broad categories of films discussed in this work:

Table 11

Film Budgets in Broad Categories

Category	Production details	Budget range	Cast	Representative Films
Studio Films	Produced by major studios: Disney, Universal, Sony, 21st Century Fox	$25,000,000 - $200,000,000	Big named stars: Chris Pine, Angelina Jolie, Brad Pitt	*Guardians of the Galaxy, Star Wars Rogue One, Beauty and the Beast*
Indie Films	Produced by independent producers: The Weinstein Company, Fine Line, Fox Searchlight	$1,000,000 - $20,000,000	Stars looking to do "serious" work: Al Pacino, Kate Blanchett, and lesser known Screen Actors Guild (SAG) unionized actors	*Carol, Room, Shakespeare in Love, Pulp Fiction*
DIY Films	Produced by "outsider" producers with access to some capital, usually outside of Hollywood	$25,000 - $1,000,000	SAG actors working on a low-budget day rate (typically $100/day)	*Cotton*
No Budget Films	Produced out of pocket by first time filmmakers with no access to bank capital	Under $25,000	Unknown actors, non-union, usually working free.	*Picnic, Parallax, Aspirin for the Masses*

Significantly, by 2015 Sundance had come to represent both the best of outsider filmmaking shot cheaply on digital cameras in the contemporary era, and the kind of filmmaking practiced by professionals, insiders, named actors and famous directors common in Hollywood Independent films. DIY cinema, however, was so widely practiced by 2015 that most of the filmmakers I met conducting this research had little or no hope of being included in Sundance unless they cast well-known actors in their projects.[219]

In 1986, Sundance considered eliminating the competition categories from the festival. If they had done so, there might be a very different history to write because the awarding of laurels by Sundance is a big part of the festival and its rituals. Marketers use laurels to sell unknown movies to wider audiences.[220] By 1995, there were 375 films in competition. In 1996, that number jumped 600% to 1,950 entries including 1,200 short films. These numbers indicate an increased inclusion and interest in the competition from outsiders, novice directors and students. The presence of shorts is important as many first-time filmmakers start with short film to learn the craft.

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[219] In truth, while the Sundance films from 1985 were made relatively free from the Hollywood studio system, they did not represent a complete break from that system. The Coen Brothers became what Roland Joffe already was: insiders who used known actors in their films and worked with a significant filmmaking budget. Their first film, *Blood Simple*, cost $1.5 Million to produce. Jim Jarmusch, director of *Stranger than Paradise* used found film in leftover cans, cast no-name actors, and shot each scene only one time using a wide shot in every take. This film worked within the constraints of no budget for its first third, then used some funding to shoot on location in Ohio and Florida for its final two-thirds of screen time. The programming of *Blood Simple*, *Stranger than Paradise* and *The Killing Fields* perfectly framed the identity of the then-emerging Sundance Film Festival, an institution that endeavors to embrace the best of cinema with less consideration of film industry status than is seen inside the Hollywood studio system.

[220] http://www.sundance.org/festivalhistory (Accessed 5/13/2016)

Competition at Sundance has served as a benchmark of quality in independent filmmaking. An official selection or prize from Sundance can be life and career changing, and thus filmmakers pay the price of the trip and show up to be seen, even if they don't expect to win. Lauren Greenfield, who in 2016 was the creative force behind the *#LikeAGirl* advertising campaign, first came to national attention with her digitally shot *Thin* in 2006. She has screened three films at Sundance including *Kids+Money* in 2008 and *The Last Queen of Versailles* in 2014, where she won the Best Director competition in the Documentary Feature Film category. She is an extraordinary filmmaker recognized by an important cultural institution, which confers upon her status when dealing with other important institutions. Her *#LikeAGirl* campaign for the brand Always appeared prominently in the 2016 Super Bowl and the 2016 Olympics.

Sundance walks a tightrope between insider and outsider film projects. In 2014, for example, 54 first-time filmmakers displayed their work, among 12,218 films in competition that year. By contrast, 250 features competed in the 1992 festival cycle.

Sundance Screenwriters Lab

On March 4, 2011, I applied to the Sundance Institute's Screenwriting Workshop. This was my first and only paper-based entry into a film festival competition, I printed the script, hand-wrote and application and cut a check. At this time, not all festivals had shifted to online submission platforms. It took a lot more time and effort to do this work off line. The promise and stature of Sundance justified the effort. I had to mail in an application with a printed hard copy of my materials.

The entry cost $35 plus the cost of printing, binding, and mailing the script to Park City, Utah. I first sent Sundance pages 1–5 of the screenplay, a plot synopsis, a biography, and statement of aspirations. I sent the materials after significant screenplay revisions through improv with our cast of actors. On August 9, 2011, I received e-mail notification that I had made the Second Round of the Sundance Screenwriters Lab competition. (See Appendix 34) This was a tremendous boost as it came during our longest hiatus from production. If not for this single e-mail, we may have never finished the film. It might have collapsed, or a crucial actor may have dropped out. The screenwriting contest drove us forward, and when we lost momentum, this one and others helped put us back on track. I did not survive past the finals at Sundance, but making this round was a major boost to our morale as we embarked on several years of shooting. In 2015, I entered the film into Sundance competition. The feature was not selected in that cycle. The competition is intense. However, I found an audience and a community at much smaller festivals around the globe, but our inclusion in Sundance competition was still an experience that fed my own artistic identity and was also communicated by other low-budget filmmakers I met conducting this research. Writer-director Michal Sinnot who like me was a finalist in the Sundance Screenwriting competition used the platform for exposure and sought funding for her feature. She raised her first $50,000 after Sundance and is still today looking for the rest of a $1.5-million budget. She chose a different path "attachments and presales" and "second private equity" with her Sundance credential

as a marker of quality.[221] Michal used her initial investment to travel to Tanzania to shoot a proof-of-concept video for further financing.

Toronto, Where Serious Cinema is Big Business

Toronto, like Cannes and Sundance, is both a festival and a market. Toronto does not have quite the reputation of Sundance or Cannes. It does, however, specialize in serious Indie cinema. It stands on a tier just below the top two and alongside Venice and Berlin. Toronto traditionally launches Academy Award campaigns. In 2015, the year our film was in the Marketplace, the festival screened Brie Larson's *Room.* A few months after Toronto, *Room* received multiple Academy Awards. *Spotlight*, the film that won Best Picture at the 2016 Academy Awards also premiered at Toronto. Interestingly, *Spotlight* won only a second runner-up trophy at the festival. It lost to *Room* in that competition. Film distributors often choose Toronto to release their best films because of its place on the calendar. Both *Room* and *Spotlight* were set up for a press blitz after the success at this festival.

A telling anecdote about the Toronto Film Festival. Kristen Stewart, famous— or infamous—for her role in the *Twilight* films has attempted to recast her career as a serious indie actress. In recent years she has appeared in lower budget, more intellectually challenging films. Stewart in 2014 was in three films released first to international festivals: *Camp X-Ray* at Sundance, *Clouds of Sils Maria* at Cannes, and *Still Alice* at the Toronto Film Festival. Among these three films, *Still Alice* was the one best positioned for the Academy Awards, and Toronto was its launching pad. In

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[221] Email exchange and ethnographic field notes, 12/8/17. Michel strives to be an Indie director and is putting in the leg-work to cross the threshold into Indie production. She has no interest in DIY.

2015, Toronto launched *The Martian*, *Trumbo*, *Brooklyn*, and *Beasts of No Nation* into Academy Award competition. This festival, along with Sundance and Cannes, represents a space where the best in film is celebrated, but with the caveat that most of the screenings are both big budget and indie. For smaller budget feature films, Sundance, Toronto, and Cannes represent a distant, almost impossible, ambition. Yet those smaller films do find an audience and community at the smaller festivals.

The public exposure granted by film festivals offers an opportunity for DIY filmmakers to enter the mainstream world of film. In my own case, I took our outsider, no-budget film *Aspirin for the Masses* to international markets via film festivals and was able to achieve a measure of success through awards. Our film collected laurels that identified it as worth digital licensing. The laurels were more important to the sale than the film itself, I believe, because the laurels and festival selections indicated a small but specific audience for the movie, an audience that was perhaps interested in the bizarre, the fringe, DIY. Because of these festival appearances and accolades, I signed a deal with film distributor Altar Entertainment, a sales agent located in West Hollywood. Altar in turn sold our film to Amazon Prime. This license will mean some small profitability for this small project and is an indicator of some tiny success as a financial investment. Ultimately, the film is flawed, bizarre, but in terms of how films are measured, it won some laurels and those laurels, in turn, brought a small return on our financial investment, some tiny level of eventual profitability at the end of a ten-year license.

Festivals are typically scheduled in the same time-period year after year. In this way production companies can plan to attend the events in sequence with each

new crop of movies. Many film companies attend Sundance in the Winter, Cannes in Spring and Toronto in the Fall. This is the schedule that Altar Entertainment follows. They attended the Cannes Marketplace with our film in 2016, but before that took it to Toronto in 2015 shortly after we made our deal. I had previously had success with small festivals leading up to Toronto. From that exposure, Altar Entertainment found *Aspirin for the Masses*. We executed a sales contract that paid them a commission for ten years on all licensing contracts. They printed posters, wrote press material, and took the film to market. I did not attend the Toronto Film Festival, as our film was not an official entry in competition. As a filmmaker, I accompany the film to screenings, but not to sales meetings. It would be appropriate for me to ask into those meetings as the film's executive producer, but I chose not to as I felt stretched too thin. I made mistakes in directing my film when I lost focus. This was a time where I let the paid professionals do their work. With no physical and embodied role to play in the sale of the movie, I focused my festival budget instead on the fringe festival screenings. I detail that process in the next section on fringe festivals.

Photograph 19

Poster Altar Entertainment took to 2015 Toronto Film Festival
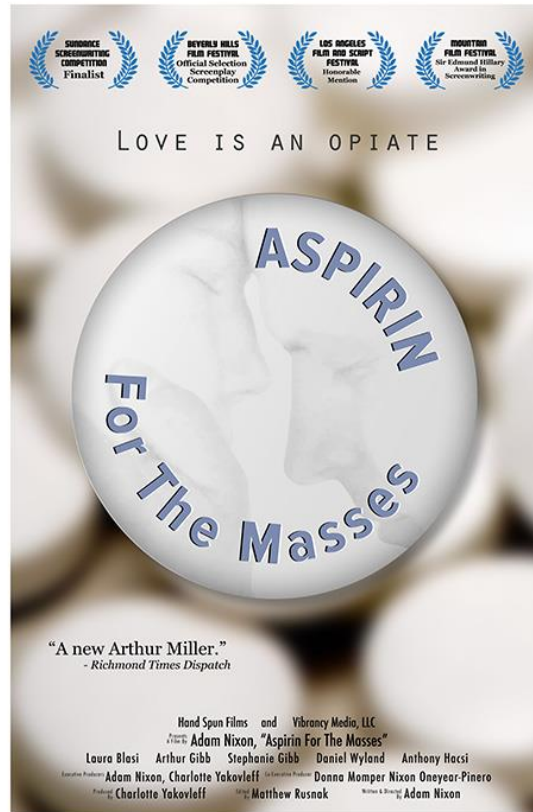
DIY Fringe Festivals

In considering the differences in festival reception between famous and outsider filmmakers, one should make a distinction between the large international film festivals and the smaller niche festivals. Lynden (2015) argued that the Sundance film Festival in Utah "sets the bar for independent filmmaking worldwide," and I have stated that Cannes is perhaps most important festival in the world, while Toronto is where Hollywood premiers the favorites for Best Picture every year. Beyond

Cannes, Sundance and Toronto, however, a thriving film festival circuit of smaller or less prestigious festivals exists.

Film is more deeply meaningful in the festival space, a unique social experience that is an important source of context for both artists and spectators, and for the industry as well. Victor Turner in *From Ritual to Theatre* writes that performance is the "proper finale" of an experience. Performance and experience contextualize each other, offering a semiotic structure and a deeper understanding to both. Performance is essential to experience, whether that experience is intellectual or emotional. Experience gives meaning to the performance, even if the understanding "is that there is no meaning."[222] In this context, the film festival experience colors the film ontologically for everyone involved in construction and consumption. For our film, that meaning was located on the fringe festival circuit.

The worldwide community of film festivals is massive, consisting of more than 5,000 active festivals and more than 10,000 festivals held since the beginning of the millennium in 2000. According to www.withoutabox.com, more than 200,000 filmmakers worldwide submit their work to these festivals annually.[223]At the smaller film festivals, outsider filmmakers often receive VIP, even royal treatment. My own status as an outsider, for example, was reinforced at some festivals, but at others I felt welcomed into the community as a visiting VIP filmmaker, especially in Nice, France as chronicled in Chapter one and in Jakarta, Indonesia where we were introduced to

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[222] Turner, Victor. From Ritual To Theatre, Introduction, "Social Dramas And Stories About Them," and "Dramatic Ritual/Ritual Drama", 13-18

[223] Withoutabox and Filmfreeway.com allow filmmakers to enter competition at many of these festivals from their desktops using the internet. Memberships to the sites are free. Once uploaded, a film, screenplay, or pitch can be entered seamlessly into festivals with the payment of an entry fee through the site (using PayPal, a mailed check, or a credit card).

the royal family. Why was our reception different at the fringe (tier-three) festivals? We were in our element, DIY artists at DIY festivals, we had won a competition against others, and had been invited as special guests. Our films would never be big box-office, but in these spaces, that was beside the point. At festivals such as Film Fest International, Berlin, the business aspects of film are deemphasized, and a premium is placed on artistic and/or individual expression. Hence, I argue that the film festival world is roughly a dichotomy: film as business and film as independent art form, some festivals emphasize the former, some the latter, and some do both on a grand scale. Both communities, film as business and as art, are thriving on their own terms.

Aspirin for the Masses is a DIY fringe film. It has no named actors. A first-time director made it cheaply on a digital camera. Just as water finds its own level, this film screened at several small filmmaker-centered festivals around the world. This part of the process was the most emotionally fulfilling for me as a writer-director, and most interesting as a researcher. I will likely never be able to claim a huge return on the money I invested making the movie, attending festivals and paying future sales commissions on small licensing deals, but I did receive non-financial rewards at these international events.

Photograph 20

Receiving Best Picture, United States from the San Francisco Global Movie Festival. I bought a new suit for the occasion. Shaking my hand and presenting the award, Michael Paré of *Eddie and the Cruisers.*[224]

Fringe film festivals are akin to academic conferences. Built from unique communities, they are site-specific, take place over a brief period of days, and engage in discourse around a theme.[225] Community building and recognition of achievement are central components. Many fringe festival audiences are made-up of other filmmakers only. In contrast to an open, popular screening held at a Cineplex with popcorn, most film festivals tend to draw elite intellectual audiences who pay a fee for all-access badges. Knowledge, expertise, and class separate these participants

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[224] http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0085475/ (accessed 2/20/18)
[225] Often the location of the festival is as important as its theme. Filmmakers will choose festivals based on exotic or important locations, so as to draw special significance from the site of the event.

from casual filmgoers (perhaps race and gender however are not categories of exclusion as film festivals tend to attract varied ethnic and gender mixes). Boards of judges admit the participants into the proceedings based on their quality or the fit of their film into the program.[226] At these gatherings, the filmmakers sit together in the screening room or at the bar, and then build a Facebook page to stay connected to their new friends and colleagues. I met many of my current Facebook friends at film festivals while conducting this research. We have active communities that support each other's new work and our ongoing participation in more events. We are all "insiders" at these festivals in contrast to the exclusion we feel when attending Sundance, Cannes or Toronto.

English is the universal language spoken at every fringe festival I attended, including those in Italy, France, and Indonesia. At the St. Tropez Film Festival in France, English was the native language. Films in any other language, including French films, were labeled foreign. Perhaps this was a nod to Hollywood, the perceived home of the movie business even by fringe filmmakers working from found locations in cities around the world. Perhaps it was a realistic acquiescence to English as a currency language.

An interesting note about film festival screenings. After nearly every film, the audience asks the same three questions, usually in English. How much money did you have? What camera did you shoot with? How long did it take? Few or no questions about meaning or aesthetics are typically asked. Filmmakers at these smaller festivals seem to want to know how any film was made, not what it means. Why might this

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[226] This creates a bonded-community where everyone knows everyone else has passed a test of admission.

be? Filmmakers on the fringes assign meaning to work practices, a well-made film on a micro-budget can have more assigned value than a film just as well made on a larger budget. The supposition made is that the filmmaker with more money had an easier time as money can fix problems, it can buy better lenses, get more lights, hire stronger actors. In this construct, therefore, filmmakers seem to ask first about the production so that they then know how to read the film.

During the 20-year festival life cycle of the entire *Aspirin for the Masses* project, I applied to 135 film and theater festivals (first as a play, then a screenplay, then a movie). I began submitting applications from the beginning of the play writing process in 1996 (three events) and continued until May 2016, the one-year anniversary of the film's rough-cut premiere.[227] I stopped applying to new festivals approximately one year after our premiere because of a need to limit my research, and a cost/benefit calculation that figured film festivals lose interest quickly in an "older" movie. The website Film Festival Secrets describes this perception: "Feature films generally have a festival shelf life of about a year from the time of their world premiere. Short films can hold out for 18-24 months." There are exceptions to this time frame. Exceptions to shelf-life considerations usually occur when there is popular interest in a known film, major awards from international festivals, a festival director who takes a keen interest in the work, and sometimes, "pictures just have a longevity with audiences that defies the common wisdom."[228] I felt a shift in momentum as our film aged. Early in the process I was accepted into festivals at a

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[227] Film festivals can take a year or more to sift trough and judge entries. I received my last notification from a festival application in January 2018. It was a no, meaning that I had no more festivals to attend for *Aspirin for the Messes,* so with the defense of this project I can call this process finished.
[228] http://filmfestivalsecrets.com/ffs/2014/10/when-to-stop

more rapid pace, and as I wound-down to the film's one-year anniversary—first

birthday—that pace slowed.

Appendices 34-37 have a full list of our film festival applications plus

responses. Some will be familiar, but most are obscure and known only inside the

community of filmmakers and festival organizers. I applied to the largest American

festivals first—Sundance, Slamdance, SXSW and Tribeca. Many filmmakers follow

this path. A premiere at one of these top festivals can mean immediate success –

bidding wars between distributors, and theatrical distribution. I did not apply to

Cannes or Toronto, they were at the time too far out of our reach. Our finished film

was not accepted to any of the first-tier or second-tier festivals, for example Berlin or

Venice. If this were Major League Baseball, I would have to start in the minor

leagues. I applied to The Berlin Independent Film Festival, Annapolis Film Festival,

San Francisco Global Movie Fest, Cannes Underground Film Festival, the Beverly

Hills Film Festival, and The Mountain Film Festival— some successfully, others not.

My application strategy was akin to a college application process; some of the

festivals were a "reach" while others seemed to fit our film closely (i.e., indie, no-

budget, DIY).[229] On the surface, this may read as a frustrating process. In actuality, it

is a rewarding foray into community building. In my case I was able to locate

filmmakers who shared my aesthetic tastes and mission. In total, *Aspirin for the*

Masses received the following awards and festival selections: 54 Laurels (including

sections, nominations and prizes), 25 Official Selections, and 5 trophies (Appendix

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[229] For the full list of applications and selections, please see Appendix 34-37. The entries are
transcribed in application order and sorted chronologically.

37).[230] Small (even tiny) festivals around the world accepted our film as an official selection and rewarded it with jury prizes, trophies, and laurels. The movie traveled to Milan, Berlin, Nice, San Francisco, and Jakarta among other foreign locals. Screenings rooms were sometimes filled, sometimes empty.

In addition, I participated in film festivals in other capacities, including as a judge, organizer, researcher, observer, and participant with various projects as listed below:

- **Cannes Film Festival 2015** – Observer and Researcher

- **48-Hour Film Festival, Dublin 2013** – Official Selection/Participant

- **Mountain Film Festival 2011** – Official Selection/Student filmmaker award in Directing for my short film, *The New Burlesque*

- **East Coast Student Film Festival 2012** – Keynote Speaker

- **University of Maryland Student Film Festival 2012-2014** – Judge (four cycles)

- **University of Maryland Communication Department Student Film Festival 2014-2016** – Faculty Advisor (three cycles)

In total, I participated in-person at 22 film festivals from 2011–2016 and three theater festivals in 1996 and 1997. I reference the theater festivals only because of their connection to the *Aspirin for the Masses* play. The focus is the film festivals exclusively and not the associated theater festivals. Importantly for this analysis I was present for our screening, i.e. the digital performance of our film, and in as many

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[230] It's fair to ask how the film could win so many laurels but still not make any money. This film received very little theatrical distribution, was never purchased by a cable channel or by a foreign television network, that is where feature films make massive revenues. My film will eventually turn a profit by selling the online screening license. I would never have been found by the agent who sold that license without film festival participation and laurels.

ways as possible also physically present as the filmmaker at the screening. I walked

as many red carpets as I could afford. Other digital filmmakers have a similar story,

most attending all or nearly all live screenings of their films during the one-two year

period after festival release.

Film Festival Applications – *Aspirin for the Masses*

On January 11, 2011, I submitted the working screenplay for *Aspirin for the*

Masses to The Mountain Film Festival and the Los Angeles Film and Script

Festival.[231] Both festivals ultimately awarded prizes to the script. This bit of good

fortune came at an ideal time. The announcements were made later in Winter/Spring

2011, after we had cast the film, and concurrent with our rehearsal and improvisation

work. We were just beginning to shoot the movie (that process is detailed more fully

in Chapter Three). The small awards and certificates the film garnered at this stage

were a huge psychological lift. We spoke of the awards often during the production,

reminding each other that the film script—a script we had all shared in fixing through

improv—had already been recognized by festivals. These small laurels made us feel

collectively that this unpaid labor might eventually result in reward, financial or

otherwise. (See Appendix 17)

Film Festival Applications and Entry Fees

In total, I spent more than $3,000 on film festival entries for a film that cost

$500 to shoot and $6,500 on food and editing. I had a 15% success rate with these

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[231] Both festivals had entry fees, $55 for The Mountain Film Fest and $40 for The Los Angeles Film and Script Festival. Those fees paid to the website www.withoutabox.com. See the appendix for copies of the receipts.

applications, overall. One could argue that 85% of the film festival judging fees are a waste of resources. I offer the counter argument that these fees are an appropriate part of an outsider film's initial budget. In this way, a $500 film becomes a $10,000 film. At this budget level, we are still in the Sundance "No Budget" category, but we have designated a portion of our limited funds to finding an international audience.[232] In this next Chapter, I detail the film festival experience and attempt to locate my subjective experiences inside of site-specific observations of the role festivals play in the workflows of the so called "no-budget" digital filmmaker.

Cannes and Hollywood "Independent" Film Festivals

On February 9, 2011, I entered the screenplay for *Aspirin* into the Cannes Independent Film Festival. The cost of this entry was $55. This was not a successful entry; the festival rejected the screenplay from competition. In the case of The Cannes Independent Film Festival, it is small and of little stature, but is in an area that I desperately wanted to attend as a filmmaker. There is only one Cannes Film Festival, but there are many other film festivals in and around Cannes. Some examples include the Cannes Underground Film Festival, off-site screenings in Cannes during the festival weeks, and countless others that try to exploit the glamour of Cannes in their festivities. I entered multiple competitions in Cannes, and ultimately our film was included in the Cannes Underground Film Festival and given an Audience Award. But that was not until 2015, nearly four years after my initial rejection from the first small festival there.

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[232] It is no coincidence that this was the amount of money I pledged to the movie in 2010. I simply spent money until it ran out, then I did any more needed work myself.

Film Festival Financing

Most fringe film festivals—like fringe theater, dance, or any other indie form—are resource starved. Most pass along some costs to filmmakers. For example, the festivals typically arrange for a hotel as an official base, book rooms in bulk and then resell those rooms to the attendees for a slight profit. This helps defray the costs of the festival and generates some funds to cover operating expenses. Festivals also typically charge a screening fee for film entries, and a reading fee for scripts. These fees can range from $3 to $135 per entry. Most festivals will receive many entries in each category and use these funds to pay staff. It is fair to ask if the cost is worth the benefit of attendance, especially when also considering flights and hotel expenses. Even with cost considerations, and the payment of festival screening fees, I have faced tremendous competition to attend festivals. The San Francisco Global Movie Festival told me that in 2015 they received thousands of film entries, accepted 300, screened 60 and then "awarded prizes to a handful."[233] The San Mauro Turin International Film Festival (STIFF) 2016-2017-2018, told semi-finalists that they received 19,000 entries, and were lacking both staff and funds to get through those applications quickly. Their official selections were delayed first for a year, to 2017 and then for a second year. STIFF did not charge an entry fee, was overwhelmed by the volume, had no money to pay staff, and subsequently folded after awarding semi-finalist laurels (this was the last laurel our film would receive in 2018, two years after we entered). Their Facebook posting below speaks to the difficulty of running a fringe event.

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[233] From Field Notes, August 2015

Photograph 21

STIFF Facebook posting, 2/15/18

STIFF
1 hr · 🌐

It is with great regret that STIFF will no longer be there this year. Thanks go to all those people who complained, storming us with messages. STIFF was a free festival. Precisely for this reason we have received over 19 thousand films from all over the world in 1 year. We made a first selection with 4000 semi-finalists and in the coming weeks we would have identified the 100 finalists. But we could not do it anymore because thanks to these people, Filmfreeway closed the festival account. We are very sorry for all those people and all those directors who believed in us. But unfortunately there are also many bad people. Thank you

😢 Sad   💬 Comment   ↪ Share

😢👍😮 You and 22 others   Chronological ▾

Typically, film festivals will also charge for official merchandise, for airport transfers, and for the awards dinner, bar, and celebration. Filmmakers do not pay to attend screenings. Audience members buy individual tickets, but filmmakers receive all-access passes as part of the submission and hotel booking process. One can ask how much each red carpet walk costs. And then ask how that invest pays off, both financially and in other ways.

The Filmmaker of the Year Film Festival in Jakarta, Indonesia, for example, charged a $35 fee through filmfreeway.com to review our film. Though it was

nominated in the best feature category, the festival extended a chance to compete in multiple other categories for additional fees.[234] The additional categories included:

- **General Categories**, $75 USD, International Feature Film, International Short Film, International Documentary, International Short Documentary, International Newcomer.

- **Creative Awards**, $75 USD Single category: $275 USD for five categories: Director, Producer, Script-Writer, Lead Actor, Lead Actress, Cinematographer

There were 18 Creative Award categories; I applied in the Director category after paying the additional $75 fee.

- **Special Awards**, $100 USD (Per category), International Filmmaker of the Year, International Narrative Filmmaker of the Year, International Documentary Filmmaker of the Year, International Newcomer of the Year, International Director of the Year, International Producer of the Year, International Cinematographer of the Year, International Screenwriter of the Year, International Editor of the Year

Options to attend priced as follows: [235]

- **Ceremony Dinner Pass**, $100 USD: Award Dinner in a Hotel and Award Ceremony in Theater.

- **Bronze Package**, $175 USD: Networking Lunch, Master Class, Film Discussion, Award Dinner, Press Conference, Award Ceremony.

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[234] http://www.filmmakersoftheyear.com/2015/gen_categories_special_awards.htm (Accessed 10/28/15).
[235] http://www.filmfestivalservices.com/festival%20november%202015/festivals_november_package.htm (Accessed 10/28/15)

- **Silver Package**, $275 USD: 1 night and 2 days in Official Hotel (Single room), Networking Lunch, Master Class, Film Discussion, Award Dinner, Press Conference, Award Ceremony.

- **Gold Package**, $500 USD: 2 nights and 3 days in Official Hotel (Single room), Welcome Dinner Buffet, City Tour, Networking Lunch, Master Class, Film Discussion, Award Dinner, Press Conference, Award Ceremony

- **Platinum Package**, $750 USD: 2 nights and 3 days in Official Hotel (Single room), 2 Festival Winner T-Shirts size XL, 1 Festival Poster with individual films Photoshopped in (75 cm x 100 cm), Interview for Profile in Film Reporter Online Magazine (November 16 at 10:30 AM), Advertisement Banner in Film Reporter for 1 Month, Plus all of Gold Package

- Airport Pickup Services, $105 USD

- Airport Drop Off Services, $95 USD

- DVD Screeners, $50 for 2 discs

- Blu-ray Screeners, $80 for 2 discs.

I purchased the original entry, the Director Creative Award entry, the Platinum attendance package, airport transfer and return, and DVD Screeners. In total, I spent $1,110 to participate fully in the festival and another $1040 in airfare for a total cost of $2,250—for a single festival. Film festival participation is by far the largest part of my budget. It is fair to ask how this investment in a four-day event could be worth the cost. In the next section, I offer specific red-carpet experiences, and explain the unique fulfillment a filmmaker can find there.

Withoutabox.com and FilmFreeway.com

Digital technologies enable the festival revolution. Foremost are the platforms that connect festivals with films, producers, writers and directors. These platforms act as online meeting spaces for this community, not dissimilar from farmersonly.com, match.com and other dating sites.

Photograph 22

Film Freeway celebrating its 3000th film festival client in 2015 [236]

WithoutaBox and Film Freeway are the two websites used by film producers to connect with festivals. Amazon owns Withoutabox.com along with cloud hosting services and IMDB.com—three services that house media, archive production details,

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[236] A story of amazing growth. Within two years from launch, it became the most used film festival submission platform.

and connect media with venues.[237] Before these online submission platforms

filmmakers had to track down mailing addresses, cut checks, print scripts or record

films to video tape to be considered by film festivals. The process was cumbersome.

By 2008, 125,000 filmmakers used Withoutabox to submit to over 2,000 film

festivals. This website patented the on-film festival submission process and has the

exclusive contract for Sundance Film festival entries, but many filmmakers complain

that the interface is clunky and too costly. Withoutabox has drawn criticism from

"filmmakers and festivals alike," accused of excessive charges. Some festivals had to

pay as much as $2,000 upfront for the service, while others chose to pay an 18% on

all entry fees collected, as well as an upfront fee of $500 to $1,500. The organizer of

the Utah Film Festival described the website as "clunky to use," slow and exorbitant,

"after everything was done I was required to buy a marketing package for a few

thousand dollars or they would not publish the festival."   The 2001 Withoutabox

patent, and the subsequent sale of the service to Amazon "meant that anyone who

tried to set up a rival site would have to go against Amazon's deep pockets." One

festival director, Jon Gann, said, "I don't like to be beholden to software that I think I

could do better myself." Gann developed his own submission platform that he later

shut down. The "daunting prospect" of a lawsuit, was "too strong."

The best aspect of using this site is that all the information used to create your

entry automatically populates an IMDB page for your film. Using this tool gives

fringe filmmakers a stamp of legitimacy. The IMDB listing is perhaps one of the

more culturally significant indicators of a real movie. Having this entry, done

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[237] https://www.withoutabox.com/ (Accessed 10/28/15)

properly, with photographs, reviews, cast lists and crew names is an indicator that the film is more than just a YouTube video, that it has cultural significance.

Canada-based FilmFreeway came online in 2013, with the following message: "The game is about the change. Finally, a free and user-friendly alternative to Withoutabox for filmmakers." Film Freeway, the main competitor to Amazon's Without a Box, is a late entry into the film festival world. The website began operation in March 2014. Within two years, it vaulted past Withoutabox.com in web traffic as measured by Alexa.com, a web analytics site (see Appendix 33). On October 29, 2015, Film Freeway sent a Facebook blast to its followers claiming to have passed Withoutabox.com as the world's #1 submission platform for filmmakers and festivals. In the same message, they claimed 200,000 filmmakers use the site. This website is an upstart compared to the more established Withoutabox.com; but it is better designed, easier to use, and less expensive. There is one major drawback, however: Film Freeway does not automatically update a film's IMBD page. Perhaps because of the ease of submission and certainly because of the rapidly increasing number of digital filmmakers, the growth in film festivals has been tremendous, and these two platforms have greatly eased this process.

The Website FilmDaily.com described the interplay between Film Freeway and Without a Box as David vs, Goliath. Withoutabox, AKA Goliath, began at the turn of the millennium when the internet was new, and films were still mostly analog. The David of this story – Vancouver-based FilmFreeway – remains "a favorite by filmmakers and festival owners alike." The upstart website was constructed to not infringe on Amazon's patents, first with smart design and then further by being based

in Canada. Within three years, between April 2016 and December 2016, Withoutabox had 535 film festivals listed, whereas over the same period FilmFreeway had 2,190 festivals –four times more. Indie Memphis Executive Director Ryan Watt "We prefer to be on one platform to manage the submissions and have found the FilmFreeway interface to be easier to navigate on the backend. Filmmakers have given us similar feedback that it is more user-friendly." Like Watt, I moved all my submissions to FilmFreeway in 2014, because I liked the lower cost structure and that the interface allowed me to sort laurels by category.

Currently, FilmFreeway has 4800 festivals in its database while Withoutabox focuses on high-profile partnerships. Withoutabox announced an "enhanced film festival submission management service," developed with Sundance and the Toronto Film Festival. Lela Meadow-Conner, acting executive director at Film Festival Alliance "It's exciting to hear about the enhancements WAB has added and we are eager to see them in action and hear feedback from our membership."

The Withoutabox patent is set to expire on December 7, 2018. Meanwhile other submission platforms are being setup beyond the reach of the US patent. German site Reelport represents 170 short film festivals, Spanish site Clickforfestivals has 1200, and Festhome is the largest of these three with 1800 festival clients.

The Red Carpet

The importance of the red carpet to the outsider DIY filmmaker, is that they are performative spaces where the fringe filmmaker declares himself or herself as having "arrived" or as possessing cultural significance. I posit that the performative

aspects of festival participation, and the performance of status in the form of certificates, trophies, and online postings, constitutes one of the most, if not the most significant component of the film festival experience.

The red carpet at film festivals, even the smallest of fringe events, is iconic, symbolic, and performative.[238] Like the Yellow Brick Road, it must be walked. The path along the carpet is the route to discovery of a new self, a savored arrival to a magical place. Like Oz, that ending place may be less than what was hoped, but the journey itself is significant, lasting and transformative. The red carpet separates filmmakers from the audience to receive attention from press. Later they are reunited to attend the screening together. This is a transitional space cordoned-off by armbands, lanyards, and security guards. It is a sacred space and taking part in this ritual signifies the arrival of an artist, a person worth celebration.

For many of the filmmakers I observed, including myself, the performance of filmmaker in a festive, shared space might constitute the most rewarding aspect of participation. The symbolic and *actual* apex of the festival performance for the filmmaker is the glorious walk along the red carpet prior to screening the film. This section will describe some of my own experiences walking the red carpet at festivals.

On May 15, 2015 I walked the red carpet to premiere our new digital feature film, *Aspirin for the Masses*. I was in Nice at the St. Tropez Film Festival.[239] On May 16—one day later—I walked the red carpet at the Cannes Film Festival as a visiting

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[238] This mirrors Susan Seitzer's description of Tamil Special Drama in her Ethnographic study of performers in India. She wrote the Special Drama serves as icon, index, and symbol. (Seitzer, 131)
[239] The Festival is named for St. Tropez but held in Nice. This sort of spatial discontinuity is common in the fringe world as festivals move, close, reopen, and change names or all of the above. A year later the festival had changed its name to include Nice in the title.

filmmaker and as a researcher for this dissertation. The first red carpet in Nice was a temporary rug placed in front of a nylon 10'x10' banner with the fringe St. Tropez Festival's logo printed in horizontal and vertical rows. That red carpet was in an airport hotel. The second red carpet in Cannes is perhaps the most iconic in the world. At the end of the Nice event, the red carpet was folded up and put into storage. The red carpet in Cannes is in place year-round. It is mecca for the Cinephile, where Bridget Bardot, Goddard, Orson Welles, and Julia Roberts walked on the way to their screenings. The carpet in Nice and the carpet in Cannes—while only 20-mintues apart by Uber—represent two extremes in film festival pageantry, one at the top of the hierarchy, the other on the fringe. But both carpets were red, and that was important.

I was in Nice at the invitation of the festival, our film chosen from more than 1000 applicants to screen on a Friday in France. I was walking on a red carpet, the VIP filmmaker at this event, and I had arrived, both physically and figuratively. Did it matter that it was a small event and a small crowd? Not really. What was critical was that for these two hours I was the guest of honor. I was in an exotic locale. Our poster was hanging in the lobby. This liminal experience transformed my identity, my sense of self. Director Babu J. Aryankalayil told me after a successful screening of his 2017 documentary *Like I'm Flying,* "I just want to walk a red carpet."[240] He was referencing film festival fees and travel expenses for his then already finished film. It is the last chapter in the narrative journey.

Erving Goffman in *The Presentation of Self* argues that the individual is both performer and character in the presentation of identity. These roles can be closely

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[240] Field notes and Follow up interview, 5/15/17

correlated or divergent. For Goffman the self is a performed creation. Self is not an organic thing that has a specific location. Its fundamental fate is to "be born, to mature, and to die; it is a dramatic effect." One acts out the dramatic performance of self in a site-specific manner on the red carpet, the audience being comprised of the individuals on the periphery, the digital audience of friends online, and, importantly, the inner audience of one. We are performing for the audience outside as much as for the true self. The filmmaker on the red carpet is constructing his or her character in the moment. "In their capacity as performers, individuals strive to maintain an impression that they are living up to the many standards by which they and their products are judged." (Goffman, 1956) Thus, the audience for that performance is both external (other people at the festival) and internal (the filmmaker's true self). In more contemporary theory scholars analyze changing identity politics through the live and digital and through accomplishments and professional artistry. All components contributing to identity and the sense of self.

The red carpet at the San Francisco Global Movie Festival awards ceremony (FOG Fest) was shocking to me. Leading up to the awards night the event had seemed like any other modest film festival, the screenings held in a suburban movie theatre in San Jose, California. San Jose was the birthplace of the internet, but most tech entrepreneurs had left for greener and cleaner parts of The Valley. It is the California city that made national news when it declared bankruptcy a few years ago. San Jose is not San Francisco, Beverly Hills, or Cannes. It seemed to be a modest festival in a modest part of Silicon Valley. The week began in an inauspicious manner. The screening was held on August 12, 2015 at 9 pm at the Camera 12 Cinema. I arrived

262

hours early and found the red carpet rolled up inside the theater lobby. We had made an uncompressed high-res digital "print" of the film for this screening that cost $1000 plus shipping. We had to spend the money because this was a "real" theater with a high-tech DCP digital projector. This was not a hotel ballroom, an academic classroom, or an iPad.

Our movie poster hung on the front window of the Camera 12 Cinema next to the poster for Judd Apatow's *Trainwreck*. This was a working movie theater where patrons could see Hollywood's newest releases alongside an unknown indie film, but it was no palace. It had seen its better days in the distant past. I tweeted out a photo of the two posters side by side.

Photograph 23

Posters for *Aspirin for the Masses* and *Trainwreck* hanging in the window of the Camera 12 Cinema in San Jose, California, August 11, 2015

This was the biggest screen our film ever enjoyed, popcorn was for sale in the lobby, and the seats raked up 90 feet in more than 40 rows. It was no palace, but it was a real movie theatre with a small red carpet in the lobby.

When I arrived for the awards ceremony later that week in August 2015, I was shocked to see that the second red carpet was 150 yards long, 20 yards wide, and crowded with hundreds—and eventually thousands—of people dressed for a special occasion. To gain access to the official press and filmmaker reception area on the carpet I had to present my "filmmaker" armband (although walking up with Miss San Francisco might have been just as effective—beauty queens and evening gowns lined the space). Three bullpens sequestered international media, where they interviewed the arriving filmmakers, stars, and starlets. To my surprise, I had stumbled into one of the best-attended film festival events in the U.S. It is an important yearly event for Silicon Valley's Indian diaspora. The festival had flown over Bollywood's biggest stars for Lifetime Achievement Awards, premieres, and paparazzi. I was lucky to have been included as a non-Indian American outsider filmmaker.

The red carpet in Silicon Valley was the most exclusive on which I was an official guest rather than a researcher or a fan. It was a Saturday night. Celebrities handed out awards between dance events, tributes to leading Indian actors, and performances by well-known singers flown over from India. The host called *Aspirin for the Masses* for Best Feature – United States. I got up on stage in front of thousands of people to collect the trophy. We beat out a lot of competition for this prize including movies that cost 10x or 100x or 1000x what ours did. Michael Pare was on stage in a grey suit, purple shirt, and no necktie, the epitome of Hollywood

264

cool. He was once on Hollywood's "A" list. That was long ago in the 1980s when he played Eddie in the film *Eddie and the Cruisers*. An 80s heartthrob, Michael had received a Lifetime Achievement award from the festival earlier in the evening and stayed on stage to present other winners with their trophies. On stage with Michael were festival officials, and Bollywood's beloved "Bad Man" Gulshan Grover, an actor with more than 500 films to his credit.[241] He was dressed all in black. Grover is a Bollywood star. Many of the festival attendees were there in part to pay tribute to his career.

Photograph 24

Tweet from San Francisco Global Movie Festival awards ceremony.
Bollywood star Gulshan Glover

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[241] http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0004109/

Framing this afterward as a researcher, I see a space where digital and embodied intersect. Without my cheap camera, my paltry $500 shooting budget, my flawed film I would not have been in this space to be interviewed by foreign press, chat with Miss Asian America over champagne, meet former Hollywood A-lister Michael Pare and joke with Gulshan Glover that I wanted to cast him as the villain in my next film. Without the movie I would have been an imposter on this red carpet, but the digital film *earned* me an all access badge, a trip up on stage, and a trophy that sits on a private shelf in my home library—there for only me to see as a reminder of my new-self. I should note that I intentionally use my versus our to describe this experience, the co-owners of the film were invited to the festival but chose not to attend with me.

Big Fish in a Small Pond – Shom Das

The festival in San Francisco was an exception: a large festival that included our film in its lineup. Every other festival that invited me to screen was small. I was a visiting VIP at those festivals, one who was a part of a community of filmmakers. The small festivals gave us a chance to play, to try on the costume of filmmaker and dream of Cannes or Sundance. In San Francisco my presence and others like me was to a large degree inconsequential. It can be read as a gracious gesture to a DIY filmmaker to assist him on his journey. It only has meaning though if I show up to the party. At one point in the week, lacking confidence in my prospects of winning a prize against so many other better-made films (I thought) I nearly skipped the awards ceremony to spend that weekend at the beach in San Jose. I went so far as to rent a

room and drive out there before placing a courtesy call to the festival coordinator

telling her that I would not be there for the event. She talked me into attending, telling

me that she couldn't say why, but that "you will want to be there."[242] This

conversation seems in retrospect to be deeply meaningful. I did want to be there,

obviously, and importantly the film festival wanted me there. I was as vital to their

identity formation as they were to mine. The relationship was symbiotic. As someone

who oversees student film festivals I can identify with the organizer's position, in that

capacity it is important to me to share in the triumph, bask in that moment.

I revisit my interaction with Shom Das to describe the process by which a

small film by a little-known filmmaker can come to play an outsized role in a film

festival circuit. Her work is experimental in the tradition of Stan Brakhage, an

important filmmaker from the analogue era. Shom, in this era is important to two

specific groups. One, Film Fest International, hosts small events in six cities around

the world, with a seventh city on hiatus. Their cities are Amsterdam, Berlin, Nice,

London, Madrid, and Milan with a now on-hold festival in Tenerife in the Canary

Islands. Shom has attended these festivals and won prizes from each with her seven

features. She is a regular there. Both the filmmaker and the festival benefit from this

symbiosis. The filmmaker can add trophies to her case and laurels to her list, while

the festival has a reliable attendee and an artist in whom they can invest. Before I ran

out of travel funds, I too was one of the filmmakers this festival circuit invested in, as

are a handful of my on-line friends met on this circuit including filmmakers Maria

Socor, Lance Steen Anthony Nelson, Kevin Hannah and Mauro John Capece. I didn't

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[242] Field notes, 8/11/15

267

win as many prizes as Shom, but I felt in conversations with the organizers a sense

that they wanted to help this community grow as artists. At the awards night in Berlin

in 2016, for example, the festival director Carl Toomey told me he had to "fight with

his board" to give our film its trophy that evening for best feature comedy (our film is

polarizing, no doubt). It was an honest exchange between the event and one of its

awardees that encapsulates this exchange of meaning.[243]

Shom Das comes from an academic family, is a former pop star in India, and

is married to a television executive. She self-finances her movies to some degree by

using royalties from her music career. She is a published poet in her native language

of Hindi. Shom's films are lyrical, poetic, surreal, and personal. They feel at times

like they emerged directly from her subconscious brain during REM sleep. Shom

surrounds herself with strong artists, actors, and cinematographers, making feature

length dreamscapes in exotic locations (most of her budget goes to travel and hotel

costs). She can afford this luxury by keeping each film budget to approximately

$15,000. She told the *Times of India* in a November 2015 interview, "It's an

outstanding feeling to be appreciated on such a global platform yet again and I'm

proud to represent India as a female filmmaker and hope that I can continue to excel

at my storytelling film after film."[244]

I interviewed Shom days after she won a prize from Film Fest International,

Berlin. I asked her a series of questions about her role in film festivals and the

meaning she sees in participation (See Appendix 31). First, I asked her to describe

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[243] Field notes, 10/3/16

[244] http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/entertainment/hindi/bollywood/news/Shomshuklla-Das-film-wins-an-award-at-the-Italy-International-Film-Festival/articleshow/49816267.cms (Accessed 5/`9/16)

what the festivals mean to her. She wrote that, "She could have made [her] films and never entered a festival, then what's the use of my films." Shom equated the "the whole process" without the festival to be akin to "cooking great pasta at home" but eating it alone.

Shom framed the work as part of a creative journey with personal growth as a goal. She did not reference financial gain. Shom admires filmmakers who are "self-driven" but in need of an outlet. The film festival opens "a great platform to creative people to believe in their work." Receiving recognition on a "global platform" motivates the artist to create the project.

Shom wrote that entering a global film festival, specifically one in Europe or America, is a personal journey of "education, rather than competition." For her, film opened a chance to experience the world, serving in some ways as a passport to foreign cultures and exotic locales.

Finally, I asked what meaning she drew from the international screenings. Shom replied, "I watch different films in different festivals" and meet "talented people from all over the world." Further, the international festival experience "opens my universe, and my world becomes just a dot, a point I can connect from wherever I live." I am hearing in this interview a filmmaker who is using the festival circuit as a kind of classroom. She is picking up from the screenings, from the formal discussions, from the casual interactions with other filmmakers, a learning experience.

Small Fish, Big Pond

My conversations with filmmaker Jonathan Ryan revealed a deep ambivalence over his identity within the film community and raised questions about how DIY fringe filmmakers at festivals can capitalize on the sudden elevation of their "status" during and after the red carpet. Jonathan expressed dismay at the dissonance of being an official selection at Cannes, in the Shorts Corner, while still being shunned as an outsider when the real "celebrities" appeared for their red-carpet moments. He felt shoved aside (see Appendix 32). Over the two-week span of the festival, he expressed evolving thoughts about his own identity as an artist. In the first week, he felt a tremendous high just from attending, in part due to the festival's glamourous location in the South of France; by the second week, however, he was "crestfallen": "Yes, I was here and so close to this industry but . . . I was still extremely far from being where I wanted to [be]." He made a short film, out of competition. It screened in Cannes, but at the big events he was cordoned off with the fans, past the press, not allowed on the red-carpet with the celebrities who were in-competition. He felt his outsider status most keenly "before an in-competition film's premiere," when the director, crew, and stars all walked into the theater. Jonathan was separated by hundreds of people, "a literal/metaphorical barrier" blocking his "path and view" across the red carpet. "I was there, but certainly not the one walking into the big theater." For the outsider filmmaker, festival appearances lend legitimacy, helping to garner accolades for their work and providing exposure to elites and institutions in the industry. Such events, however, can foster feelings of alienation, especially when barriers prove more difficult to traverse than first imagined.

Chapter 5: Laurels – The Archive and the Embodied Performance of Filmmaker

In earlier chapters, the film festival was presented as a space vital to identity creation for contemporary digital filmmakers. In this chapter I trace how filmmakers first announce, then experience and then archive the liminal transformation on a red carpet. I delineate between the archive and the ongoing performance of the filmmaker, to find linguistic meaning in the posting of laurels on social media. Performance and archiving feed one another, with the archive serving as a continual reminder to the performer that they have earned access to the performative aspects of filmmaker. In other words, the archive acts to enliven the lived performance, and the linguistics serve to give referential meaning to the embodied.

The film festival event is a coronation of sorts that enables a shift in status from novice to experienced, and from journeyman to expert, even from outsider to insider. The festival environment allows for the granting of such new status. In this section, I discuss how that status is archived and displayed. The purpose of archiving, ultimately, is to trumpet the new identity, and to reinforce that transformation. Diana Taylor in *The Archive and the Repertoire* describes "overlapping systems of knowledge and memory" that might combine the workings of the "permanent" and the "ephemeral" in different constructs. She describes one type of knowledge as archival and another as embodied. Each system of containing and transmitting knowledge exceeding the limitations of the other. Embodied performance can never

be "contained" in the archive; while the archive endures "beyond the limits" of the

embodied. [245] In other words, bodies die while the archive endures.

Photograph 25

Film advertisements vie for table space the day after the St. Tropez film festival awards dinner. Trash or treasure?

[245] Taylor, 173

In Taylor's formulation, the archive cannot capture the ephemeral repertoire that is performed live.

The cordoning-off of the filmmaker on the red carpet performs a liminal function. The filmmaker transitions from one social status to another. Display in the home acts to reinforce that new status in the filmmaker's psyche. These symbols act as proof that the space was traversed, and that the ritual was performed correctly and with fealty. This is like the hanging of diplomas on walls at home. A diploma hung in public, however, has a very different meaning: it is performative, and therefore must be read in the context of the embodied performance.

Victor Turner in *From Ritual to Theatre* writes of the symbols used within ritualized passage, and the meaning of those symbols within the larger social milieu: Symbols are essential to social processes (and psychological ones as well). Performance of ritual takes the form of distinct phases in the social process whereby groups adjust to internal change. The ritualized passage from one social status to another often takes the form of geographic movement within space, and often involves the physical separation of the ritual subjects from the rest of society. Van Gennep distinguishes three phases in a rite of passage: separation, transition, and incorporation.[246]

When a filmmaker hangs their festival prizes in a public space, that filmmaker is trumpeting their new status. This shift can have direct and indirect effects on their professional standing. For example, the process can facilitate the opening of opportunities that were previously closed. Further, although the film festival awards

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[246] Turner, Victor, From Ritual to Theatre, "Liminal to Liminoid In Play, Flow, Ritual", 22

often come with no cash prizes, awards can help to generate funds through increased prestige.

Film festival laurels, trophies, and sashes provide an archive that the filmmaker can utilize after the event has ended to justify and inform a new identity. This process can take place in a lived professional environment, and it is seen in the digital world through postings to social media. There are vital spaces where the contemporary digital filmmaker archives their liminal transformation; they include Facebook, Twitter, and IMDb, Instagram, Linked-in and other online platforms. Nearly every filmmaker I observed posted their laurels to Facebook (photograph 25 and 26) or to Linked-In. Many presented them in their workplace—or their academic environment—as a means of building an enhanced professional reputation. Facebook is the most important online meeting place in the fringe filmmaking community. Festivals typically form digital Facebook communities to announce prizewinners, share information about screenings, and post pictures. Filmmakers use the shared space to advertise their films, post their laurels, claim new stature, and accept congratulations for their prizes.

Photograph 26

Posted to Facebook on 9/27/15 by filmmaker Kevin Hanna[247]

Ashraf Shishir of Dhaka, Bangladesh is the Founder and Executive Director of the CreActive International Open Film Festival (IOFF). Ashraf is a filmmaker and screenwriter himself. His festival accepted applications in the spring of 2016 through Film Freeway, receiving 4000 submissions across a broad range of categories. Those categories included Feature, Feature (in progress), Shorts, Films About Women, Nature, South Asian, and Student Films, to name a few. When Ashraf announced on June 8, 2016 the Official Selections, Semi-Finalists, Prize Winners, Screenings, and Best from Country nominations from 105 nations, he invited participants to join the

247
https://www.facebook.com/PublicAccessTheTVShow/photos/a.846685018781974.1073741830.84631 2365485906/879638828819926/?type=3&theater (Accessed 9/28/2015)

closed Facebook group constructed for the festival. The festival took place two days

after this announcement, from June 10–14. By the 14^{th,} there were 650 members of

the closed group.[248] The page offers a stunning display including posters from many

of the films in competition. Film posters tend to be visual with bright designs,

dramatic photographs, and, in the no-budget community, often an array of laurels.

The temptation when browsing is to scan the poster and move on, not reading the

specific laurels but instead enjoying the overall effect, perhaps counting the group of

laurels, while ignoring the specific details (photograph 27).

248

https://www.facebook.com/groups/1009931115722610/?multi_permalinks=1066253883423666&notif_t=group_highlights&notif_id=1472065793686666 (Accessed 8/25/16)

Photograph 27

Psyche Poster [249] from the CreActive Film Festival Facebook group page.

This Facebook closed group, however, quickly became a space to express

discontent. Filmmakers complained of a lack of information regarding prizes,

screenings, and laurels. It is not atypical to find fringe festivals in disarray. The

numbers can be staggering. The chart below shows International Open Film Festivals

(IOFF) by the numbers including the number of judges, entries, nominees, and

winners:[250]

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[249] Posted to Facebook on 6/15/16, https://www.facebook.com/groups/1009931115722610/
[250] http://www.ioffestival.org/ accessed 6/15/16

Table 12

IOFF by the Numbers

338 Jury Members	105 Countries Participating
4000+ Entries	40 Official Selections
29 Festival Prize trophies	1 Best of Festival Prize trophy
105 Best from Country Prize Laurels	

The logistics of such an endeavor are difficult even when festival staff is paid. This may be why more festivals have ceased operations since 2000 than are active in 2017. Screening entries, reading screenplays, coordinating travel, and making trophies may be more work than most film festival directors realize. Most fringe festivals, however, work with large teams of volunteers. In my ethnography, I noted that Film Fest International has a small staff of 4–5 people but up to 20 volunteers at every event. The online meeting space is a place to coordinate information, award prizes, discuss logistics, kvetch, and archive the event.

Twitter is a site used by fringe filmmakers but seems to be more of a space where fans can interact with more established, bigger budget celebrity directors. [251] For example, well known Hollywood producer-writer-director Judd Apatow is active on Twitter, with more than 1.5 million followers. I would like to describe a Twitter exchange between he and I concerning our movie posters. Apatow saw my Tweet to

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[251] IOFF featured in the previous paragraphs uses Twitter to tweet out news, but has only 40 followers, compared to 650 members in the closed Facebook group. As a fringe filmmaker, I have 300 plus Twitter followers. These are tiny communities compared to major Hollywood entities and individuals.

my modest 250 followers, and first "liked" it; he then forwarded it to his followers.[252]

This is the most exposure my film has gotten to date: 60,000 impressions (see frame-grab below, photograph 28):

Photograph 28

Twitter exchange with Judd Apatow
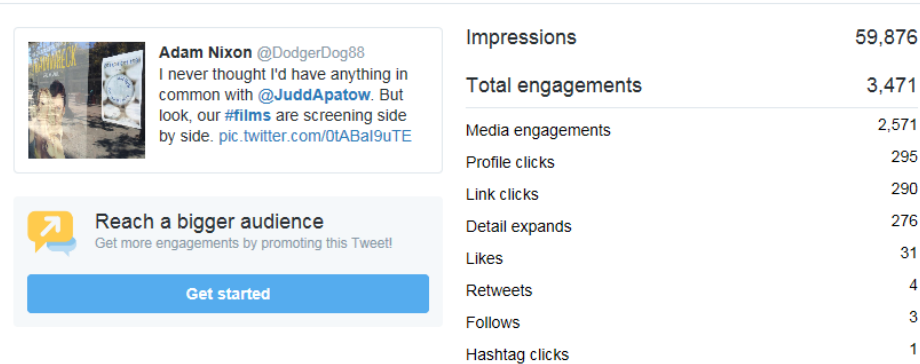
The "like" from Apatow has meaning for me personally, as it was an acknowledgement from a Hollywood producer of my new status as *filmmaker*. I do not want to overplay my hand, but it was an important moment in the lifecycle of our movie. Social media provided me an opportunity to interact with the Hollywood establishment in a way that was obviously unbalanced; it meant a lot more to me than to Apatow, no doubt. However, it was nonetheless an interaction and an acknowledgement. This is likely why fringe filmmakers go to social media—our work is our work, and the films are what they are independent of social interaction. But, that interplay in social media is meaningful.

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[252] https://twitter.com/DodgerDog88/status/631186926435893248 (accessed 6/16/16)

The IMDb Website started in a basement in the UK in the 1990s. It has grown

to be the archive of record for contemporary filmmaking. A film is not *real* if it is not

in IMDb. It may be a YouTube posting, social media, or video, but it is not film.

Stephen Spielberg was widely rumored to be reading IMDb from his seat at the 2016

Academy Awards. It is hybrid space where movies are databased, actors are listed

across projects, and even the most obscure filmmakers get credit for their work. It is

also a place where the latest Hollywood blockbusters are advertised. It is useful to

examine the IMDB page for Shom Das's *Hopscotch*:

Photograph 29

Frame grab of IMDB Listing for *Hopscotch* (2015)

This page is as much about the Pixar blockbuster *Finding Dory* as it is about the film archived and researched.[253] One could read that as excessive commercialism. The Larry David profile may very well be an advertisement as article placed by the studio selling his show. Half the page is an obvious advertisement. But, from the perspective of the no-budget fringe filmmaker this juxtaposition of massive budget media advertising beside the entry for their film creates a space where the projects are—for a moment at least—equal in status.

Performative Practice in Social Media Postings

Postings in social media constitute a specific language system that lends itself to an archive of personal change or transformation. The postings document that transformation, the movement from one status to another and the dialogues between fans and filmmakers. Peggy Phelan in "The Ontology of Performance: Representation without Reproduction" writes that we live in the "rickety bridge" between the self and other (174). This is a compelling means of elucidating the digital archive of the fringe filmmaker. Instead of reflecting ourselves back to ourselves, this rickety bridge would create a more dynamic performance space where the filmmaker stakes out status and stature vis-s-vis festival prizes.[254]

Linguistic anthropology is the study of language in social contexts. We know from Chomsky and linguistic anthropology that all languages share a kind of universal structure; Chomsky's transformational-generative grammar demonstrated the primacy of syntax in the study of language. Further, Susan Blum in *Making Sense*

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[253] Accessed 8/1/2016
[254] Phelan, Peggy "The Ontology of Performance: Representation Without Reproduction" In *Unmarked: The Politics Of Performance, 147-174*

of Language writes, "Language makes us human. Whatever other characteristics we have… it is clear that everything we do at all times involves language."[255] We understand language is a series of signs and symbols learned in the crib, in the schoolyard, at the kitchen table, "principally through interaction." From these disparate theories on the performance of language, we can build a construct that allows the simple online posting to mean much more than the sum of the words. Meaning conveyed in the specific shape of the laurel, and in the language and the syntax of the text. When we communicate about communication, we are providing a frame of understanding. Much of the social media postings of film festival wins, laurels, nominations, and selections are intended for an audience outside of the filmmaking community. This communication about the performative act of filmmaking and festival going is a valuable tool in establishing context, tone, and meaning.

One could argue that a festival laurel is a small payoff for a significant amount of work. That is true. Yet such an argument fails to account for the varied ways this change in status rewards the filmmaker. In my own life, the laurels have helped me to gain employment in media and in academia, for example. Social media provides a space to collect accolades, which can then be shared in whatever way the filmmaker chooses.

DSLR Cinema – Audience and Reception

The audience for digital, no-budget, DSLR/DIY cinema is typically comprised of smaller communities, such as screenings for groups of friends and filmmakers,

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[255] Blum, Susan, *Making Sense of Language*

elite or "intellectual" audiences at film festivals, and online digital communities.

Stanley Fish (1976), in his work on reception theory, asserts that reading is a temporal

and dialogic activity filtered through interpretative communities, real and imagined. It

is not a great leap to apply reader theory to digital film reception if one considers the

digital film to be a kind text. [256] Watching a DIY film, like reading a book, involves

filtering the material through one's own identity or community vantage point, which

necessarily colors the response. DIY film reception includes audience amazement that

a member of the community (my brother, cousin, friend) made a movie, or was in a

movie, as much as a straightforward analysis of the film text. Making films for these

audience communities is often a motivating force for the filmmakers, a finding that

has informed much of my research. For example, many filmmakers in my study were

concerned about reactions from the community of other filmmakers and hoped that

their work would be well received. Through their film, they sought to create status

within this culturally specific group and provide entry into bigger budget productions

via the resultant exposure and networking. This desire to enter a community of

professionals seems to be a motivating factor for many of the people involved in the

form.

John Thornton Caldwell in *Televisuality* (1995) and *Production Culture*

(2008) writes of the need to approach cinema studies from both a text-based and an

ethnographic perspective. In Caldwell's construct, research pairs textual analysis and

"extant scholarship" with a study of the means of production, the people who make

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[256] Stanley Fish, "Interpreting the Variorum." *Critical Inquiry* (1976).

cinema.[257] Cinema Studies has been text driven, offering a less than full understanding of the medium. Caldwell asserts that "industrial reflexivity" directly informs production practices and film texts. Caldwell engages in "integrated cultural analysis" using artifacts of production, interviews with producers, directors, and below-the-line technicians, on-set field observations, economic analysis, and investigations conducted at professional gatherings, film festivals, and awards events. I have employed many of the techniques advoked by Caldwell and can now offer my final research survey as a means to a deeper understanding of digital film reception. These surveys were hand-written, collected immediately after a digital film screening to pinpoint audience reception and response to DIY cinema.

Audience Surveys

I conducted audience surveys to draw out feelings and responses to the digital medium vs. analog film. I found—to my surprise—that an audience does not generally distinguish or even really care much about the difference. They screen a movie or go to a festival primarily to watch a story, and the film medium is largely irrelevant. A survey of digital filmmaking must include the audience. Films are made to be seen. In my research, I wanted to ascertain how my audience perceived the distinctions between digital and analog filmmaking because of my long-held belief in film's superiority as a medium over video, and the rapidly shifting aesthetics offered by digital tools. As a professional, I can see aesthetic differences in the construction of the image, members of the filmmaking community actively search out these

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[257] John Thornton Caldwell, *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008. And *Televisuality: Style, Crisis, and Authority in American Television* (1995).

distinctions. I conducted a survey of the audience at my advanced screening of

Aspirin for the Masses at The University of Maryland on November 7, 2014. At that

screening, I had an audience of approximately 50 people and received back 21

surveys.[258]

My research shows that audiences do not distinguish between media— film

vs. digital—to the degree that I assumed they would. I am trained to spot differences,

but to their eyes, the differences do not seem to be as apparent or to matter to the

same degree. This could be a result of varied factors. The audience may not see the

difference, they may not care about the difference, or they may see value in both

analog and digital media. I believe that the third factor is probably closest to the truth.

Audiences care about story and character above all, regardless of the media wrapping.

Media is important to a degree but is less significant than traditional dramatic

constructs. This is a hopeful sign for digital filmmaking and no-budget filmmakers.

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[258] See Appendix 3 for the complete list of survey questions.

Photograph 30

Aspirin for the Masses Preview Screening November 2014

I received varied responses to my audience questions, including many written replies.

The audience was a sophisticated film going audience as indicated by several

characteristics, including:

1) They sought out a digital film preview on a University campus

2) Many were actors, film and TV professionals or media insiders, and:

3) Many were friends and family of the cast

I know this because I interacted with the audience to a great degree after the

screening. Additionally, many described themselves in their responses to the

survey.[259]

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[259] These were paper surveys handed out before the screening, a common practice in film production. Typically, it is done to help finish a film to an audience's satisfaction. I used the survey in my research

I first asked how the audience consumed digital film; did they view movies online, at what sites, at movie theaters, on TV? Twenty-two audience members responded. TV, YouTube, and movie theaters received nearly equivalent numbers: [260] I next asked my key question. Did the audience prefer the look of film to digital movies? Successful Hollywood filmmakers will state that they prefer the look of film. Quinten Tarantino for example has said many times that he will never work in digital or video. But as described in my introduction, these are the opinions of a privileged few. The largest number of respondents liked both film and digital media.

I prefer digital (4)

I prefer film (7)

I like them both (13)

This is the most significant finding from this survey, one that is surprising. The next set of responses were even more shocking to my trained sensibilities, and perhaps indicated a bit of confusion among the audience members. We see here a contradictory ranking of film vs. digital but also a very clear statement that the audience does not distinguish one media from the other.[261] Nine of 17 wrote that film

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and in deciding how to end our movie. The question about the film's ending was designed to serve this dual purpose.

[260] For a complete list of responses please see Appendix 11

[261] I asked the audience to evaluate the following statements:
Film Images are aesthetically more beautiful than digital
Yes (8)
No (9)
Digital Images are more beautiful than analog-filmed images
Yes (3)
No (13)
I like both and do not distinguish between media
Yes (14)
No (6)

images are not more beautiful than digital. This finding shifts my thinking completely.

My next set of questions dealt with perceptions of Hollywood, independent productions, and DIY filmmakers. I asked the audience if Hollywood big-budget movies are "real" films, and the score was even between Yes and No; and, I asked if DIY digital cinema with amateur actors is "not real" filmmaking. Overwhelmingly the audience disagreed, 18 to 1. I left space for audience comments about the digital vs. analog discussion. These comments varied. The most interesting were:

- I have seen great films in all categories
- I really enjoy DIY movies with people who are not paid but put forth the effort to make a good production
- A good story is important the rest will come together
- I like all kinds of storytelling
- Budget does not determine quality

The next questions dealt with the movie's plot and structure. They were meaningful in producing the film but are less interesting in this context. See the full section in Appendix 11.

Finally, I ended the survey by asking if the informants would go to see another DIY no-budget film. Why or why not? Every answer was either Yes, Sure, Probably, or Why Not. That is encouraging. These sentiments reflect an interest in both big budget cinema and DIY cinema. As for myself, I consume both on a regular basis.

Although I enjoy working DIY, I would not dismiss the opportunity to work in analog film.[262]

I saw through this survey the value of digital DIY in ways that I could not see in the early years 2010-2104 when making the film. At the onset of this project, digital cameras were the compromise made to get the film made. After this research I learned that digital is an artform to itself, deserving of scholarly study, audience interest and continued output from film artists. I was equally as shocked at the end of the process when the film was sold for digital distribution. There was no online market for DIY cinema when we began, but in the years it took to finish, many viewers around the world moved online. Our distribution deal explored below is the outcome of that fortunate shift in habit.

Distribution Deals

In June 2016, Altar Entertainment asked for a QC report, a document required of film producers verifying the quality of a film's audio and video levels. It is a standard procedure to have the certification attached to big budget films. The QC business model is set up as a professional endeavor, and it is expensive. I sent our film out for bids. I received two back, both approximately $2000. The film has ended its festival run. We received our laurels, posted them online, and I hung the certificates on my office wall.[263] I joined site-specific communities of outsider fringe

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[262] Some of the more specific responses included:
    Yes, I think it is good to see things outside of a Hollywood production
    Sure, I am not against DIY productions
    Yes, I know a lot of effort goes into it, and I love supporting projects like this
    Yes, I was surprised at how good it was with no budget. Good job!
    Yes, raw art expression
[263] I assume the cast and crew did as well as they all have access to the on-line laurel folder.

no-budget filmmakers and continue to interact with them daily on social media. I trumpet my new status as filmmaker, and actively plan for a transition to bigger budget production. I have gotten from this process what I set out to achieve. It provided research opportunities and gave me a chance to claim the I coveted. Did I need QC, Netflix, or Amazon Prime?

Yes, digital posting was the last step in this process. *Aspirin for the Masses* needed to live online—for anonymous digital consumption—or it would simply have vanished onto a hard drive. I had two general options for this posting. Put it on YouTube as a video, occasionally counting viewership statistics, or attempt to sell the license to film sites such as Netflix or Amazon. The use of the terms video and film is intentional. To continue life as a film I had to achieve that license. That is no easy feat. The laurels help; they were the first step. The last barrier to be crossed was the QC report, and fixes to the movie required from QC, another edit that lasted through 2017. However, I again had to leave the no budget world and spend more money on the movie. I entered the professional space where money insures minimum technical quality.

Shomshuklla Das wrote to say that her film *Picnic* was licensed by Amazon.co.uk. This is the outsider filmmaker's punctuation mark. Of first importance is the festival experience, a lived, liminal event that leaves the filmmaker altered in significant ways. Distribution after the festival circuit finishes a film's lifecycle. The filmmaker has learned what they can from the shared experience and then shares their film in a traditional way. Shom wrote, "Our journey is so lonely, so

alone. So difficult." [264] The digital medium allows all forms, from Avant Garde to the Hollywood blockbuster, to be experienced by audiences in similar ways. In other words, the same process accesses both a $10 radical performance and a $100 million film; you reach both through a subscription followed by a simple click. When the process to access these extreme examples of film is the same, then the difference in their creation is to some degree mitigated.

Film scholar Nick Salvato (2011) in *Out of Hand: YouTube Amateurs and Professionals* argues that the new realities of no-budget cinema distribution mean that filmmakers can aspire to be the new Maya Deren just as easily as others aspire to make "Bob Saget laugh or coo."[265] Such distinctions as amateur vs. professional, parody vs. satire, and Avant Garde vs. middlebrow are problematized by the advance of digital imaging technology. Heady times, indeed. As I write this, *Aspirin for the Masses* received its first revenue statement from Altar Entertainment. That first financial report referenced deals completed and monies owed as of the third-quarter 2017 (See Appendix 38-40). Our first deal was the only one that has paid to date, a $399 license for mobile phone Video on Demand (VoD) in China. But the statement previews deals made with amazon.com, amazon.co.uk, amazon.co.jp, amazon.de, and Vimeo (VoD). As of February 28, 2018, eleven more Amazon platforms from Australia to Belize to Finland were added. The future for our small film, and for my friends in the no-budget filmmaking community is bright, it seems.

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[264] Email exchange 8/22/2016
[265] Salvato, 71

Conclusion

Digital filmmaking is a rapidly growing and evolving art form. The space where digital filmmakers display their work for a festival audience is a fascinating sight for further Liveness studies where text and embodied performer interact in making deeper meaning from the interplay between the body and the digital. Theatre and Performance Studies scholars can find further avenues for research in bodies perform identity alongside their digital work at film festivals, while Cinema Studies scholars can find a living companion to digital film in the body of the filmmaker in festivals and the digital archiving of that shared connection. The importance of practice as research cannot be dismissed. In this dissertation I discovered that the making of our film informed my research in multiple ways, some textually derived, others non-verbal even non-intellectual paths to understanding of myself as an artist and a scholar. Further, my performativity of my developing identity in festival spaces cannot be unbraided from my ethnographic research and more traditional social science tools. The practice-based research, traditional research and artistic exploration fed a wholistic understanding on the medium. The one has less meaning without the other, in all directions, and in all ways. Film festival spaces are where the performance of the artist in the digital world still lives. In fact, it thrives.

DIY digital cinema gains legitimacy when authored by a low-budget filmmaker in a way that reads as "nearly professional" art from an individual mind. By contrast, traditional big budget filmmakers use expensive film and digital cameras that cost hundreds of thousands of dollars and require a team of people to operate.

These teams work within institutions, at the behest of capital driven hierarchies. In this system, individual points of view can be stifled. In this way, digital cinema has a voice that is often lacking in many big-budget feature films. This is cinema cheaply made. It is quasi-professional movie making that could have been done by anyone with a digital camera and ambition. Nevertheless, it still achieves cultural capital of its own—based on film festival wins, accolades, on-line hits, fan postings and finally, a digital distribution deal and a license.

In the title of this document I reference the ones and zeros of binary code, asking if the digital represents a new kind of ontology vis a vis traditional texts. Digital cinema, video games and virtual reality simulators are composed of these ones and zeroes, which must be reconstructed every time a web link is clicked. In the introduction I asked if that click and recreation of the text entails a kind of altered ontology, which in its lack of physical presence is metaphorically no longer the spectatorship of death but the spectatorship of creation. Digital represents becoming rather than disappearing, and digital performance an act of creation, the linchpin that allows digital to be labeled performative. I would offer this as a further avenue of study. I considered the embodied performance of artist alongside the text but am intrigued by this upending of the spectatorship of death that informs both Performance Studies and Cinema Studies (Blau and Rodowick).

In this conclusion I will offer a summary of my research, my motivation for conducting this project, what I set out to discover, and the contributions to the fields of Performance Studies and Cinema Studies. I attempted to address the following research problems: We are amid a DIY digital revolution in performance, live theatre

293

and filmmaking. Disciplines are merging, coming together, hybridity rules. For example, digital projections are standard in theatrical design, filmmaking is practiced by millions around the world, much of film, television and digital media embraces liveness as a means of building an audience. I considered: What do the blended mediums of film, theatre, and digital media tell us about culture in 2018? What kind of revolution is happening, and what does it mean to artists and audiences? What is radically different in DIY digital cinema in the current era? What does an embodied understanding of digital filmmaking offer to an academic consideration of the medium? Further questions included, what is the relationship between mainstream artists and outsiders in the digital era? Who owns production, output, the identities, and even the bodies making the artistic product? How has control shifted, i.e. is there a new freedom from institutional control? Further, are there generational differences that can be uncovered between digital natives and digital immigrants?[266] Finally, I asked about the role of the physical in identity and status creation – or put differently, I asked if the festival environment acted as a liminal transformative space for digital outsider artists disconnected from institutional control.

The methodologies included practice-based research, my filmmaking and Ph.D. coursework began simultaneously in 2010, with dissertation research conducted from 2010-2018, while the film was completed in 2017, with an updated revenue statement from my Sales Agent arriving on April 1, 2018 as I prepared to defend this project (appendix 40). Filmmaking offered an environment for embodied learning.

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[266] Both phrases coined by Marc Prensky (2001, 2005) "digital native" to describe Millennials, and "digital immigrants" to refer to those not born into the digital world (Generation X, Baby Boomers, Elders).

Sometimes knowledge comes from creating. It is a non-textual, intuitive knowledge, and yet it colors intellectual pursuits, theoretical framing and leads to a more nuanced understanding of the outcomes. I conducted surveys to ground my work in Social Science. I received back more 119 responses across 4 surveys, 3 quantitative, 1 qualitative/narrative. I conducted ethnography on set and in film festival environments, including auto-ethnographic research. I studied the following populations, 1) primarily individuals working outside Hollywood with little money. These populations included directors, cast, crew, distributors, producers, and programmers working in no-budget cinema and festivals, and 2) Sales agents, filmmakers and producers at huge international festivals – all engaging in big money, business, and art. I observed what everyone went through, and then asked questions regarding meaning in the form of formal and informal interviews across the spectrum. Finally, I conducted archival/database research, specifically looking at patent applications, drawings of tech and patent descriptions from 1881 through the current era. I attempted to uncover why some tools fostered institutional control of the medium while other disrupted that control.

I made the following discoveries. Digital tools allow freedom from institutional control but introduce a need for artists to compromise with collaborators on set. There is an ironic shuffling of power, the director is no longer an authoritarian in some instances because on the DIY set, there is simply no way of compelling participation. I labeled this the Director's Dilemma. If a director is too confrontational, volunteers will simply walk off the project in search of something more collaborative. Ownership is decentralized in a system disconnected from

capitol. The digital world is one where shared ownership is thriving. Everyone has a voice, an artistic instinct, people want to express themselves free from institutional control. Finally, filmmaking is redefined in the current era, embodied performance of filmmaker in a festival space is more fulfilling than all of the on-line hits, and physicality has meaning for both the audience and the artist. We long for a human connection, even in digital media. We are performing for varied communities, embodied and online, some old, some new.

Millennial generation filmmakers are free from notions of how things used to be done. They are inventing new processes, are not overly concerned with how Baby Boomers or Generation X made movies. Further, they work in digital media as if it were film, not drawing distinctions between media, film is still film even if it is divorced from analog film stock. Millennials seem to have a distinct work process freed from excessive (even debilitating) respect of the past, meaning they are not overly beholden to historical standards, aesthetic constructs, legal restrictions. They simply create digital media and post it without worrying to as great a degree about how the giants of the past did it. Their work can be understood by a brief consideration of the YouTube parody video. They engage in parody and tribute online, re-cutting the work of their favorite and least favorite artists in the same spaces. This work can be characterized as containing, 1) Borrowing of texts, 2) Anti-elitism, 3) Playful aesthetics, and 4) a distinct process, created by and for their generation.

Generation X DIY filmmakers are digital immigrants, working with an analog accent. They remember splicing film with tape, editing cut-to-cut, working in 8mm,

16mm or if lucky, 35mm film. This memory of the past has created a duality in their identities as they wrestle with the great filmmakers of bygone eras while forging a new DIY path. The audience, however, is less concerned about media format than I and my Gen X peers in film would have imagined, Quentin Tarantino cares about 70mm film, but the audience in my survey cares more about the quality of storytelling (narrative arc) than production details. This surprised me.

It is possible to make a no-budget feature film and have that film embraced by film festivals worldwide. There are more than 4000 active festivals, each with a unique niche and taste profile. Cannes and Sundance are still the biggest players on the worldwide market. They screen the very best in cinema of all formats and all budget ranges, from Hollywood to DIY. Indie films like *Tangerine*, shot on an iPhone 5 about the transsexual community in Los Angeles with a $100,000 budget, and *Get Out*, a remarkable $4-million-dollar Indie film that won the 2018 Oscar for best Screenplay both got their first public accolades in film festivals. Both directors walked the red carpet and in that public space declared their triumphs. However, those of us who made films not quite good enough for Sundance found the red carpet that suited our movies, and that was a remarkable end in itself.

The screening of a DIY film in a festival space is the most rewarding aspect of the creative process and leaves a lasting mark on filmmaker identity. The red carpet is a liminal space and a transformative experience. It opens possibilities for identity transformation that had been tightly controlled in the analog era by film studios. In decades past, before the advent of digital cinema, and in almost all cases one had to be named director by a huge institution. That institution owned the work, and the

identity, both could be taken on a whim. Today, one can simply make a film, find a festival that suits their style, walk the red carpet and declare oneself a director. Control has shifted from the institution to the individual. It is liberating. Ironically, though I was able to have that experience because I compromised on set with my collaborators, we shared ownership of our film and built a community to get it finished. Today I own 20% of our DIY movie. The other 80% is owned by the team of colleagues. That is a new construct worth further consideration in future research projects.

Film festival laurels, trophies, and sashes provide an archive that the filmmaker can utilize after the event has ended to justify and inform a new identity. This process can take place in a lived professional environment, and it is seen in the digital world through postings to social media. This is fresh territory for liveness studies where the digital and embodied interact in the formation of a new identity. When a DIY director posts film festival laurels online to Facebook, Linked-in, Twitter, and Instagram, they are creating a living archive to their triumph, one that lasts longer than the printed posters covered in laurels that adorn tables in festival lobbies and then get swept into the trash when the event is over.

In today's era, filmmakers are less compelled by market forces than ever before. Now, one can simply make a movie, post it online, and wait for an audience to find the work.[267] While there have always been non-commercial art films, digital tools make such films easier to produce, distribute, and market to an audience. This journey ends with the purchase of digital DIY films by websites such as Amazon

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[267] It can be noted that this is no way to make a living, to work in this manner filmmakers will need a "day job."

298

Prime, which acquire the rights to low-cost movies for a small fee (sometimes quite small, see appendix 38-40) to bulk up their libraries. Online, though the revenue generated by DIY cinema is of lees importance where the means of distribution for films such as *TikTok* ends up being no different from the means of distribution of a recent big-budget blockbuster such as *Captain America*, at least once the blockbuster film has left the cinema, aired on television and cable. The films eventually live side-by-side on Amazon Prime, in competition for online viewers.

Freedom from institutional control means that DIY directors are also freed from Aristotelian constructs in storytelling. Without market pressure to return profit from a huge investment, digital DIY filmmakers simply don't have to consider how a "normal" film is made, although many still do. I contrast our project AFTM with the work of experimental Indian filmmaker (and new friend) Shomshuklla Das. Her seven films and our single film were made over the same time-period. Ours is a film that attempted to have a coherent story arc (not always successfully), Shom's films do not wish to fit that structure. Both screened side-by-side in competition at festivals in Nice, Berlin and Milan, and both now stream side by side on Amazon Prime, generating a small yearly royalty payment that will put all the films in the black within a decade. This shows that the market for cheap digital DIY works, that filmmakers do not have to go hat-in-hand to a bank. More importantly, it shows that individual vision is welcomed in the new digital DIY cinema.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Digital Filmmaker Survey

1. What best describes your experience as a digital filmmaker?

    a. I'm a first-time filmmaker trying to learn the industry

    b. I'm an experienced filmmaker looking to expand my network

    c. I have had a number of films and screenplays in competitions at film festivals

    d. I have produced self-financed films and screenplays

    e. I have had a film(s) and or screenplay(s) produced by an established production company

    f. I have had a film(s) and or screenplay(s) produced by a major studio

    g. If you have ever made a film or written a produced screenplay, please describe your experience:

2. What sources have you gone to for funding?

3. Which funding sources would you be interested in using for current and future

   film projects? (Select all that apply)

   a. Kickstarter

   b. Indigogo

   c. Film studio

   d. Loan from family

   e. Personal funds

   f. Small business loan

   g. Why did you select these specific options?

4. Please rank the following in order of your interest:

   a. Film

   b. Video

   c. Digital Media

   d. Television

5. What kinds of media do you hope to be making in 10 years?

6. What kind of media are you working in today?

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7. What kind of media were you working in ten years ago?

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8. Do you own your own gear?

    a. Camera

    b. Lights

    c. Microphone

    d. Editing equipment

    e. Other (please specify)

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9. Why did you invest in your own gear? Or why not?

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10. If you would like to participate further in this research study please let me know how to get in touch. This information will be kept completely confidential and will not be shared.

    a. Name and Email Address:

Appendix 2

Student Filmmaker Survey

1. What best describes your experience as a digital filmmaker?

    a. I'm a first-time filmmaker trying to learn how to set up a camera

    b. I'm an experienced filmmaker looking to develop my skill set

    c. If you have ever made a film or written a screenplay, please describe
       your experience:

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    │   │
    │   │
    └───┘

2. What sources have you gone to for funding?

3. Which funding sources would you be interested in using for current and future
   film projects? (Select all that apply)

    a. Kickstarter

    b. Indigogo

    c. Film studio

    d. Loan from family

    e. Personal funds

    f. Small business loan

    g. Why did you select these specific options?

    ┌───┐
    │   │
    │   │
    │   │
    └───┘

4. Please rank the following in order of your interest:

    a. Film

    b. Video

    c. Digital Media

    d. Television

5. Describe what you hope to learn by studying screenwriting and digital

    filmmaking:

6. What kind of media do you hope to be making in ten years?

7. Do you own your own gear?

    a. Camera

    b. Lights

    c. Microphone

    d. Editing equipment

    e. Other (please specify)

8. Why did you invest in your own gear? Or why not?

9. Do you see yourself as a professional filmmaker? Please explain

10. Please check the box below to indicate your informed consent to participate in this anonymous survey. If you do not check the box your answers will not be included in the data.

Appendix 3

Digital Film Audience Survey

General Questions:

1. How do you consume digital films (please underline all that apply)

   YouTube

   Vimeo

   Facebook

   Twitter

   Movie theatre

   On you cell phone

   On a tablet

   On your TV

   Other (please specify)

2. Do you prefer the look of film to digital movies? (Please circle)

   I prefer film

   I prefer digital

   I like them both

3. Evaluate the following statements:

   Film images are aesthetically more beautiful than digital images Y/N

Digital images are more beautiful than analog filmed images   Y/N

I like both and don't distinguish between media   Y/N

4. Evaluate the following statements:

Hollywood big-budget movies are 'real' films   Y/N

Independent movies with name actors are the best movies   Y/N

DIY digital cinema with amateur actors is not real filmmaking   Y/N

5. Which do you like best:

Big budget movies with famous actors

Low budget movies with well-known actors

DIY (do it yourself) no-budget movies with non-professional actors

Please explain:

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Aspirin for the Masses Questions:

6. What worked in the film?

The acting

The story

The editing

The characters

The directing

Other (please specify)

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7. What didn't work in the film?

    The acting

    The story

    The editing

    The characters

    The directing

    Other (please specify)

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8. Please evaluate the following statements:

I loved the ending, it made perfect sense	Y/N
I get the ending, but wasn't moved	Y/N
I hated the ending	Y/N

9. Please evaluate the following statements

I cared about these characters	Y/N
I didn't like these characters	Y/N

10. Would you go to see another DIY no-budget film? Why?

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Appendix 4

Selected narrative statements from digital-native filmmakers:

Filmmaker A:

"I knew [that] a good documentary should be interesting, entertaining, and personal. The first idea that came to me was my experience doing comedy in the DC area with my comedy troupe Aboulia! The documentary could be funny and teach people about a little known art form. I knew improv was a good choice of subject but had reservations about how I could make the film in the limited amount of time available. I had only learned a little editing technique… and relied on my partners to help run the cameras and sound equipment."

"I made numerous changes to my original plan during filming and then editing. My initial vision was too broad and I needed to focus my plan down to something more specific."

"I knew I was being too ambitious and I needed to scale down my vision in order to finish the film. I realized that I can't be a perfectionist, and in a professional setting I would have more time to edit and make a longer film."

Filmmaker B:

"To be honest – this project is terrifying… One thing I noticed was how sensitive I was to not being too bossy. I did not want to come across as too pushy or ungrateful

for their help, but there is a certain amount of direction that the actors require. I didn't realize how vague I was being about directions until I started to think about the types of questions [the actor] was asking about her character. If I had explicitly told her in the beginning, it would've helped quite a bit."

Filmmaker C:

"I made a calendar for the planning process to help keep myself on track with interviewing, while making sure I had my film done on time. Even though I am close with the kids I interviewed, I thought that it would be easy to see them and fit in the time I planned out, but it actually was not as easy as I thought. I asked their parents for permission to interview them for the documentary, which they gladly accepted. Creating a schedule that best fit all of our schedules became the most difficult part. They all play a sport after school so I could not interrupt their after school routines. On weekends, the families and myself were busy which made it even more difficult to manage in the time."

Filmmaker D:

"Having difficulty casting my male lead, I may have an all-girl cast which would be progressive and may even be a better thing as it will help the video stand out from the typical "Boy/Girl"relationship.
I'm also having an issue finding a location to shoot. My standards and expectations might be too high."

Filmmaker E:

"…idea includes a poem I wrote I couple of weeks ago. The poem is about a man missing his girlfriend that died years ago. I think this idea would work because I knew that I wanted to work on a project that was about the subject of love and death… I sat down today to write the story line for the film. I talked over the phone last night to a videographer friend, and I told him about the project I was working on. He told me he could let me borrow his slider and also one of his wide prime lenses. I'm excited about this because it will increase the production value of the film."

Filmmaker F:

"As I was going through the footage, I noticed the audio was distorted because the wireless microphone was not connected to the proper outlets. I contacted [the subject] to see if he could do a second interview."

"I was able to go to Baltimore city where [the subject] resides. We used two cameras instead of just one to capture different angles and also to make sure the audio was clear. The interview lasted about 20 minutes."

Filmmaker G:

"I decided that I am going to keep filming my documentary purely on my phone. I tried to rent out HD video cameras… and they were completely out."

Appendix 5

Selected Narrative Responses to Student Surveys — All student surveys were
anonymous, so I have included time-stamps as a way of demarcating comments.

As a junior in his third year in achieving his B.A. in Media and Communications, I've
written everything from skits to short-films to TV shows to movies, but in terms of
completion, I have probably finished about a single screen play from the synopsis
process to the outline to the drafting process… I've written also a horror screenplay
taking time off of any free-time that I have with the addition of guilt forcing myself to
perpetually keep my pen moving constantly. Preferably, as does Tarantino
(supposedly), I write on paper first then move on to the typing process. There is
something about the free-form that offers a higher sense of satisfaction for myself as
well as opposed to looking at a blank computer screen at times.
1/30/2015 12:47 AM

All surveys were anonymous per my IRB approval, so I am including the time stamp
as a means of demarcating comments.
The process is very fun because I or my crew together get to be as creative as we
want. Shooting, writing, etc. everything about it is great
1/29/2015 4:37 PM

Basic experience setting up a camera and positioning for a job, but never applied any
personal artistic direction before. 1/29/2015 10:43 AM

I've had experience making short advocacy films and spoofs that focused on germs and the consequences of using too much technology. Additionally last semester I wrote a screenplay that was about corruption within school athletic departments; it was 45 pages long and was the pilot for an hour long show. 1/28/2015 1:23 PM

Made two for your class last semester. It was interesting to be able to bring my vision to life. 1/27/2015 7:15 PM

I made a documentary for one of my documentary film class. 1/27/2015 3:54 PM

I had trouble using adobe premiere and final cut pro because we were never properly taught how to run those programs in previous film classes. The films I've made were all edited using iMovie. 1/26/2015 4:30 PM

I took the documentary class and our group made a documentary about how children feel about the sun. It was about 3:30 minutes. 9/21/2014 1:35 PM

I made a film when I went on a study abroad trip to London through the University of Maryland's Education Abroad program. It was incredibly difficult, but I had a great time doing it and I learned a lot about the film-making process. My favorite part of it was editing in iMovie, but I understand that Adobe Premier is the proper program to use.   9/17/2014 1:49 PM

313

Appendix 6

DIY Filmmaker Survey Narrative Responses

What sources have you gone to for funding?

- I have yet to create my own projects bit have worked on many projects that use kickstarter and indiegogo to help raise funds.

- I don't have a lot of money, so I try to spend next to $0.00 if possible. I usually opt for the bartering system. For instance: I offered product placement to an author for her book in exchange for her guest appearance as an actor and I did an establishing shot of the location storefront with sign prominently featured in exchange for allowing the shoot to happen there. A friend of mine was kind enough to sponsor lunch for the cast and crew, but that was just because I am lucky enough to have some really kind-hearted friends.

- I have self funded

- Personal

What funding sources will you use for future projects?

- Now, I feel I need to have bigger funding so I can do big budget films.

- Accessible and you will not be ask to alter your project to please the money guy/investor.

- I have chosen indiegogo and kickstarter because I have seen a lot of success through my colleagues projects.

- Ideally, I would like to personally finance my own film projects and maintain all creative control. However, if I found the right people/film studio to

collaborate with, I would potentially be open to those opportunities. I have

tried running two unsuccessful crowd-funding campaigns for my music and

I'm about to launch another one via PledgeMusic, but I really don't enjoy

those options.

What kinds of media do you hope to be making in 10 years?

- Movies and music videos

- Digital media

- In ten years I hope to be making multi-media experiences, involving live

  theatre and film/video/projections. I am also interested in writing screenplays

  for television and placing my original music in film/TV.

What kind of media are you working in today?

- Movies, commercials and music videos

- Digital media

- I am an actor working in theatre, television, and film, as well as a singer-

  songwriter making my own music videos for promotional purposes.

What kind of media were you working in 10 years ago?

- Ten years ago I was not working in media.

Why did you invest in your own gear? (Or why not?)

- I bought my camera because I realized I could get paid to take pictures as a

  blogger, but it has become even more useful and satisfying in my work as a

  theatre artist and musician.

Appendix 7

Student Survey question: What do you hope to learn in film studies?

- How to produce marketable films and documentaries. 9/1/2015 7:03 PM

- How to make commercials and YouTube videos. 2/7/2015 10:49 PM

- I hope to learn how to plan shoots in a more professional setting and learn how to conduct interviews in a better way. 2/6/2015 2:04 PM

- Finding my true passion in the world of Communication 2/2/2015 8:35 PM

- I hope to learn techniques that I can use to give my work a professional look 2/2/2015 10:31 AM

- Studying both concepts, I hope to understand how to appropriately displace the method of the writing onto the digital filmmaking process in order to sway these elements in my creative direction. 1/30/2015 12:57 AM

- I hope I can become better at what I love to do. I have general ideas and a sense of how to do things, but overall learning in order to get better. 1/29/2015 4:45 PM

- I hope to learn about editing software and to gain insights into how movies are created, produced, and filmed. I hope this changes the way I view films or movies and allows better analysis on my part 1/29/2015 4:23 PM

- how people communicate when acting and how screen writers use different shots for different meanings 1/29/2015 2:00 PM

- I hope to learn how to improve my writing skills in order to perfect my film making skills and eventually dedicate myself to the film making industry. 1/28/2015 1:29 PM

- screenwriting and digital filmmaking 1/27/2015 7:19 PM

- I am hoping to learn how to write an effective screenplay. 1/27/2015 6:31 PM

- I hope to learn to skillfully and creatively produce well directed films. 1/27/2015 3:56 PM

- I would like to learn how to use other forms of editing softwares and capture film with more essence 1/26/2015 4:31 PM

- I hope to learn about film so that I can talk about it intelligently with some of the creative people that I have and will meet. 9/21/2014 1:37 PM

- I'm hoping to develop more fundamental skills in order to perfect filmmaking. 9/11/2014 12:52 PM

- I hope to learn how to make a product for filmmaking, such as writing a script 9/9/2014 1:31 PM

- How to put together a well done piece. 9/9/2014 12:02 PM

- I love studying cinematography because like studying rhetoric, one gains a deeper understanding of the story in the images that are displayed, left out or alluded to. I like to read into a film like reading in between the lines in a book. I admire directors such Alfonso Cauron, Wes Anderson, Guillermo del Toro and Lars von Trier for their tremendous skill in story telling and usage of imagery to elicit emotions.

Appendix 8

Selected Responses to Student Survey question: What media do you hope to be

working in 10 years from today?

- Documentaries and Feature Films 9/1/2015 7:03 PM

- Self-help videos 2/7/2015 10:49 PM

- Short videos, series, documentaries 2/6/2015 2:05 PM

- Hopefully working with Movie directors 2/2/2015 8:36 PM

- movies, and tv shows 2/2/2015 10:31 AM

- Typically, I hope to make action related films to enhance the car-chase
  sequence, the shoot-out sequence, but I would also love to have films relating
  to drama. Making films in the drama genre relating to the aspect of love,
  marriage and the wife should make for some laugh-out-loud moments
  considering I've always acted as if my ex-girlfriend was my 'ex-wife.'
  1/30/2015 1:02 AM

- film and movies. 1/29/2015 4:45 PM

- possibly political ads possibly television promotional materials national
  geographic and discovery are interesting for me 1/29/2015 4:23 PM

- I do not want to be a film maker. 1/29/2015 2:00 PM

- In 10 years I hope to be making television media; I am pursuing broadcast
  journalism and hope to not only work in front but also behind the cameras. I
  hope that in 10 years I can be producing my own television show. 1/28/2015
  1:32 PM

- Film if possible 1/27/2015 7:19 PM

- Media photography or home videos 1/27/2015 7:02 PM

- Documentary, music videos 1/27/2015 3:57 PM

- I'm not sure. Perhaps personal videos 1/26/2015 4:31 PM

- n/a 9/21/2014 1:37 PM

- short films 9/11/2014 12:53 PM

- Screenwriting so one of the products I created can be made into the media
  industry. 9/9/2014 1:34 PM

- Any kind that will allow me to have a happy family. 9/9/2014 12:02 PM

- Creative, thoughtful and innovative images that everyone can relate to in one
  way or another. 9/8/2014 8:30 PM

- Not sure yet. 9/8/2014 4:25 PM

- It would be great to produce tv shows and films, maybe some animation.
  9/8/2014 10:51 AM

- films, documentary, print 9/8/2014 10:41 AM

- I'd like to be able to create a full length, professional documentary. 9/7/2014
  6:39 PM

- TV show would be fun. More likely... digital media 9/7/2014 2:28 PM

- Documentary, video blogs 9/6/2014 4:23 PM

- I would like to be making films that focus on social issues but in an interesting
  way so people would want to see them and hopefully be persuade to make a
  difference. 9/6/2014 2:20 PM

- Photography, videos, graphic design 9/5/2014 4:36 PM

Appendix 9

Selected Responses to Student Survey Question: Why did you purchase/or not

purchase gear?

- To work as a freelance videographer and to produce my own content without

  as much expense in renting gear and still remain profitable. 9/1/2015 7:04 PM

- This is my first class so if I enjoy it I would start to invest in the gear needed.

  2/7/2015 10:50 PM

- I haven't. 2/6/2015 2:05 PM

- because I want to create videos 2/2/2015 10:32 AM

- In consideration to my budget restraints, surely I could spend my financial aid

  on acquiring the necessary gear (which in fact, I really should if I'm this

  passionate about film), but at the same time, I am also hoping to take winter

  and summer I, summer II courses to graduate faster so for now, renting is an

  option, but only a short-term solution. 1/30/2015 1:05 AM

- I invested in my own gear because I can use it however long I want and don't

  have to worry about giving it back or time limits etc. 1/29/2015 4:51 PM

- I plan to invest in a few pieces of equipment but wanted to get advice and

  recommendations from teachers and experienced students first. 1/29/2015

  4:25 PM

- Unfortunately right now the only equipment I own is a version of Adobe

  Premiere on my laptop because I do not have the funds for my own camera or

  other film gear. But I hope that once I start working I can save up for my own

  gear. 1/28/2015 1:36 PM

- The camera belongs to my girlfriend. 1/27/2015 7:19 PM

- I love taking photographs of nature and videos of different animals. 1/27/2015 7:04 PM

- too expensive 1/27/2015 3:57 PM

- Invested because it's my hobby 9/11/2014 12:54 PM

- I think I still have my camera from when I made my first film but I'm not entirely sure. I'm not tech-savvy so I wouldn't be able to know what to do with such equipment. 9/9/2014 1:37 PM

- No purpose for it 9/9/2014 12:02 PM

- I think it is a good investment, I also wanted to explore my capabilities as a photographer. 9/8/2014 8:31 PM

- Haven't yet but would in the future if necessary. 9/8/2014 4:25 PM

- Because I wanted to create my own youtube channel but I haven't gotten around to it yet 9/8/2014 10:52 AM

- because i have worked independently, over time the equipment is paid of fast 9/8/2014 10:43 AM

- N/A 9/7/2014 6:39 PM

- I like taking pictures with a nice camera because the quality is better. 9/7/2014 2:28 PM

- Photography class 9/6/2014 4:24 PM

- I'm currently still saving up for a camera. 9/6/2014 2:20 PM

Appendix 10

Selected Responses to Student Survey Question:

Do you see yourself as a professional, why or why not?

- Yes. But only if I can pull together a great team. I cannot be the best writer, director, cameraman, and editor. I would like to work in a professional setting where my strengths take me to the top tier of film production. 9/1/2015 7:05 PM

- No, not yet. 2/7/2015 10:50 PM

- Maybe 2/2/2015 8:36 PM

- I do not see myself as a professional yet 2/2/2015 10:32 AM

- Throughout my life, I've always wondered what my niche is. From ice hockey to singing (for a girl) to guitar to skateboarding, I've always felt as if I've always required the necessary medium to communicate through yet always failed to find it. Filmmaking is that proper channel. Regardless, writing and the entire creative process offers myself relief and a content method of living that increases my wit, personality and realization of the truth through the path of Media and Communications. An unconventional path surely, but I surely do favor such a method rather than the empirical method of science and math despite loving the two subjects and their problem-solving strategems, but I feel it is my destiny and soul to communicate through filmmaking. 1/30/2015 1:10 AM

- I would say yes because I have learned how to make film as far as meeting certain standards. 1/29/2015 4:54 PM

- no, i would like to be behind the scenes or production or post production aka in the industry but not as a filmmaker 1/29/2015 4:26 PM

- Yes, I feel that after a few years of doing television I would like to pursue film making, specifically documentary films. I feel that there are a lot of stories, tragedies and injustices that need to be told and brought to light; the most effective way to get people to pay attention to these issues or stories is through good documentaries and I want to be the person the shows the world all the issues and stories being lived by people all over the world. 1/28/2015 1:41 PM

- I have a lot of interest in filmmaking but it is not considered my main interest. 1/27/2015 7:20 PM

- Not particularly because I would rather be taking professional photos of the outdoors. 1/27/2015 7:06 PM

- Maybe 1/27/2015 3:58 PM

- No 9/21/2014 1:37 PM

- Yes, because it's my passion. 9/11/2014 12:54 PM

- I see myself as someone who wants to entertain the audience; either if it's through film, television, acting, etc. I want to be a filmmaker, and I see it clearly as well. 9/9/2014 1:41 PM

- I don't- yet. I've never touched base with any sort of filmmaking or anything of that sort. If it catches my interest, I'm sure to pursue it. 9/9/2014 12:03 PM

- No. I have no training nor structural knowledge of film-making. 9/8/2014 8:32 PM

Appendix 11

Selected Responses to Audience Surveys:

How do you consume digital film?

YouTube   (12)

Vimeo   (3)

Facebook   (4)

Twitter (1)

Movie Theatre   (13)

Cell Phone   (3)

Tablet   (8)

TV   (14)

Other:

      Lap Top   (2)

      Netflix   (1)

      Amazon   (1)

Do you prefer the look of film to digital movies?

I prefer digital (4)

I prefer film (7)

I like them both (13)

Evaluate the following statements:

Film Images are aesthetically more beautiful than digital films

Yes (8)

No (9)

Digital Images are more beautiful than analog filmed images

Yes (3)

No (13)

I like both and don't distinguish between media

Yes (14)

No (6)

Hollywood big-budget movies are "real" films

Yes (10)

No (9)

Independent movies with name actors are the best movies

Yes (5)

No (13)

Production Documents

Appendix 12

Casting Notice: Over a Cliff, LLC and Vibrancy Media, LLC will be holding a

casting call for the independent film titled "Aspirin for the Masses". Aspirin for the

Masses, written by Adam Nixon, is a sarcastic comedy revolving around a truly

dysfunctional family and their friends. Actors of all types are encouraged to audition!

When: Saturday December 4, 2010 on the University Maryland's Campus in College

Park.

Where: Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center, Room 1809

Time: From 10am-3:00pm (time will be extended to 4pm if needed)

Please go out to: www.vibrancymedia.com for breakdown of cast and side

information

Or email: talent@vibrancymedia.com with Subject: AFTM (insert character name

that you would like the side for)

Appendix 13

Callback Notice: Over a Cliff, LLC and Vibrancy Media, LLC will be holding an

Open-call for a MALE ROLE for the independent film titled "Aspirin for the

Masses". ***Looking for male actor who can sing and smolder.***

Aspirin for the Masses, written by Adam Nixon, is a sarcastic comedy revolving

around a truly dysfunctional family and their friends.

ALL ROLES ARE ALL VOLUNTEER, MEALS, CREDIT AND COPY OF FINAL

PRODUCT WILL BE PROVIDED

IF YOU HAVE ALREADY AUDITIONED, NO NEED TO AUDITION AGAIN.

When: Saturday January 15th on the University Maryland Campus in

College Park.

Where: Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center, Room 1809

Time: From 10am-11:30am.

(Please arrive early, last audition will be at 11:20)

Taped Call-backs will be held later the same day.

PLEASE BRING HEAD SHOT AND RESUME WITH YOU TO THE AUDITION

Directions to the location go to:

http://claricesmithcenter.umd.edu/2010/c/about/parking/directions

DO NOT REPLY TO POST.

Appendix 14

Thank you for your purchase through Withoutabox or one of our partners.   Charges

will appear on your statement as WITHOUTABOX-FILMFEST. Please keep this

receipt for your records.

Purchased: Entry Fee for MOUNTAIN FILM FESTIVAL - 1@55.00 - 55.00

Tax: 0.00

Total Charges: 55.00

All amounts in U.S. Dollar

Order Number: 4044774

Date of Order: Tue Jan 11 9:45:55 PST 2011

Credit Card (last four digits only): American ExpressXXXXXXXX1009

User id: 1940212

Name: Adam Nixon

Address: 100 Wall Street City: Rockville Zip: 20850 State: MD

Country: U S A

Email: anixon@umd.edu

Phone:

IP Logged: 98.172.153.142

---;

Your Withoutabox Login: anixon@umd.edu   ;

---;

 If you have any questions regarding this order, please contact our Support

Department at http://www.withoutabox.com/supportcontact/ ;

Appendix 15

Thank you for your purchase through Withoutabox or one of our partners.   Charges

will appear on your statement as WITHOUTABOX-FILMFEST. Please keep this

receipt for your records.

Purchased: Entry Fee for Los Angeles Film and Script Fe - 1@40.00 - 40.00

Tax: 0.00

Total Charges: 40.00

All amounts in U.S. Dollar

Order Number: 4046214

Date of Order: Tue Jan 11 11:22:32 PST 2011

Credit Card (last four digits only): American ExpressXXXXXXXX1009

User id: 1940212

Name: Adam Nixon

Address: 100 Wall Street City: Rockville Zip: 20850 State: MD

Country: U S A

Email: anixon@umd.edu

IP Logged: 98.172.153.142

---;

Your Withoutabox Login: anixon@umd.edu   ;

---;

 If you have any questions regarding this order, please contact our Support

Department at http://www.withoutabox.com/supportcontact/ ;

Appendix 16

Cast

Character Name first, Real name second, distinguishing factors third

Joni-Laura Bush (blonde girl)

Stephanie-Daisy (brunette girl)

Kraig-Arty (Daisy Husband)

Roman-Daniel (Hottie with accent)

Roland- Tony (older gentleman that looked like he had eczema all over

his face)

Jeeves (Michael- guy who should have been the Bum)

Michael- Matt (Curly hair and balding however according to Adam "a guy

who was good looking a long time ago")

Cassandra: Karin (Solo Audition girl with German accent)

Dr. John: Caleb (older black guy)

Sioux: Jennifer (asian? looking chic)

Anne: Louise (blond who nailed it in the audition)

Kelly: Anthony (young black guy with walking disability)

James: Dave (solo audition)

Heather: Amber (hottie blond girl that Adam thinks has sex appeal)

Becky: Azudunisa (girl with cat eyes and i cant pronounce her name)

Janice: Rachel (brunette that Adam finds hot because she looks like his

wife)

Georgianne: Latecia (skinny black chic)

Nurse: Ayme or Azin (My friend or the women we were gonna cast for the butch lesbian)

Jane: Azin or Ayme (we never casted for this role, however she is in the first scene with roland accosting strangers)

ERICH: OPEN

BUM: OPEN

Appendix 17

The Mountain Film Festival

Dear Filmmakers and Screenwriters,

Congratulations!   Your film has been chosen as a Sir Edmond Hilary Award Winner at the 2011 Mountain Film Festival! You should be very proud of this distinction as yours is one of only a small handful of select films awarded this exclusive honor.

You are cordially invited to attend our annual Awards Ceremony and Filmmakers Dinner to accept your award in person and celebrate your achievement with your fellow award-winning filmmakers.

The 2011 Awards Ceremony and Filmmakers Dinner is scheduled to take place in beautiful Mammoth Lakes, California on Saturday, February 26th, 2011 at 7:30 pm at the Chart House Restaurant, one of Mammoth's finest dining establishments.

The evening will begin with a special three course, pre-fixe gourmet dinner served with a selection of fine wine. We will then segue into the formal announcement of the winning films and screenplays along with the presentation of the awards. Following the awards ceremony, filmmakers will have an opportunity to meet and mingle with their fellow award-winning peers over drinks and cocktails.

Also, as honored guests, the following day, Saturday, February 27th, you are invited to participate in our annual Mountain Film Festival Ski Outing, where the winning

filmmakers and screenwriters will have the opportunity to spend the day enjoying the world-class skiing and snowboarding of Mammoth Mountain and forging new friendships and business contacts with your fellow filmmakers.

Award Ceremony and Filmmakers Dinner Tickets:

A special discounted price of $70 per plate for the Filmmakers Dinner will be made available for one individual associated with the film accepting the award. You are welcome to invite up to 10 additional guests. The price for guests is $90 per plate.

Tickets for the Awards Ceremony and Filmmakers Dinner can be purchased online only at the following website: http://mountainfilmfestival.eventbrite.com

Tickets are limited and are available on a first come first serve basis. Ticket sales will end February 19th.

If you plan to attend the event it is essential that you RSVP via email no later than February 20th with all of the following information:

1. The names and total number of people attending in your party.

2. The title of your film or screenplay.

3. The name(s) that you would like listed on your award so that we can prepare your award for presentation at the Awards Ceremony.

4. The name of the individual(s) who will be accepting the award at the Awards Ceremony.

5. Confirmation as to whether you will be participating in the Ski Outing, and the names of all people participating. Lift tickets will not be provided by the festival.

Attire:

Attire for the evening is fashionable; upscale for the ladies, jacket for the men.

Ski Outing Meet-Up Location:

Filmmakers wishing to participate in the Ski Outing should meet at the entrance of the Ticket Tent at the base of Eagle Lodge and Eagle Express (Chair 15) at 9:30 am on Sunday, February 27th.

Please feel free to announce or publicize your achievement however you wish.

Below is a complete list of this year's winning projects.

Congratulations again on your outstanding work and we look forward to enjoying a weekend to remember with you in Mammoth!

All the best,

Seth Jones

Mountain Film Festival

info@mountainfilmfestival.com

www.MountainFilmFestival.com

Become our fan on Facebook

Follow us on [Twitter](#)

2011 Sir Edmond Hillary Award Winners

Action Sports Competition:

Beyond the Border (Riding Solo in Mexico) - Sterling Noren

Animated Competition:

The Lift - Robert Kohr

Documentary Competition:

The U Movie - Alexander Reid & Tommy Douglas

Feature Competition:

A Lonely Place For Dying - Justin Evans

Finding Sky - Emily Sandifer

Mountain / Environmental Competition:

Sick-Amour - Joel Tauber

Stepping into the Stream - Barbara Klutinis

The Natural State of America - Timothy Lucas Wistrand, Terrell Case & Corey

Gattin

Music Video Competition:

The Way We Are - John Kenney

Screenplay Competition:

According to the Surgeon General written by Benjamin Bates

Aspirin for the Masses written by Adam Nixon

Russell & Friends Against Fringy & Space Pirates written by Marce Swing

The Old Way written by Douglass Bourne

Short Film Competition:

After the Party - Charles Quinn Frutos

Calling on Others - Scott LeDuc & Andrew Matthews

El Catrin - Jesse Garcia

Quarters - Drew Mylrea

Thief, Interrupted - Daniel Conway

Student Competition:

Operation Golden Eagle - Lukas Huffman

The New Burlesque - Adam Nixon

Appendix 18

Charlotte's email on 3/24/2011:

hey adam...

on friday you should expect around 7:00/7:30 in room 1809

Matt (michael)

Karin (cassandra)

Arty (craig)

Tony (erich)

Daisy (stephanie)

Laura (joni)

Amber (heather)

Rachel (janice)

Latecia (georgianne)

Sogdiana (becky)

Saturday is no rehearsal

Sunday, room 1809 starting around 1:30 I have confirmation from

Tony (Roland), Dave (James) Azin (Jane) Ayme (Julie)...

Still waiting to hear from Joni.

Did you want to see if can get Jeeves out as well?

charlt

Appendix 19

Charlotte's email to cast:

Hey everyone,

Just an update with AFTM. Rehearsals have been a beast to schedule only

because of the amount of people (25) to juggle. With that said, the

table read was the last thing we wanted to do before we jump into

shooting. Throughout the rehearsals we have made some script changes,

so I am finalizing it this week and will send it out to you. By now you

should have had enough time to "become your character" and go off script

as much as possible for the table read. Obviously whatever changes were

made you don't have, but you should be familiar with the changes from

rehearsals.

So with the table read scheduled (Michele will be sending out info on

time and place) we are hoping to start shooting the Sunday (May 1)

after, and go from there, of course this is all dependent on peoples

schedule. So as we start the shooting process, please provide Michele

with as much availability as possible. Some of the scenes are short, so

if we can squeeze them in on a week night, that helps out a lot. In

addition, some of the locations and props are odd-ball places and

things, so please shoot me an email if you can assist in that area in

any way.

And as a final note, as you all know the screenplay won an award in the

Mountain Film Festival back in February.

This month it won an Honorable Mention in the Los Angeles Film and

Script Festival, so next time you see Adam give him a high-five.

And yes, now we have even more pressure to put out a good film.

ok, looking forward to seeing you all next Saturday

charlt

Appendix 20

Charlotte's email of the shooting script

hey guys...

Attached is the most final script for everyone. PLEASE EMAIL ME BACK TO

CONFIRM THAT YOU GOT THIS.

There should be no more changes to the script, however if there are, it

will all be done on your hard copy.

Please have a look thru and get familiar with it. Please bring it to the

table read, along with a pencil/pen.

Concerning the table read, we are reading the script straight thru and

not stop down, in order to get a quazi run-time.

If there are any questions about the script it will be addressed after,

so make notes if you need to.

People that need to leave right away, will go first.

See you next week for the table read in the room that we have been in.

(Room 1809)

Plan to arrive around 2:15. Remember that parking will be difficult so

please accommodate for that.

ltr-charlt

Appendix 21

Charlotte's email regarding out first shoot.

Hey everyone...(Please reply to ME that you got this)

Well we are about to jump into production, nervous?

Anyway, here is the call information for Sunday May 1st:

SHOOTING: SCENE: #14

Contact Info:

Producer: Charlt/Adam

Director: Adam 202-413-4121

Assistant Director: Charlt 703-927-8699

Production Manager: Michele 703-597-1082

DP: Elizabeth

Lighting: Diriki(?)

Makeup: Nichole

Address/Location:

6005 Smooth Stone Place

Haymarket VA 20169

This is about 15-20 minutes past Centreville, so please accommodate for distance

from your house.

Crew Call Time: Adam, Michele, Rachel, Elizabeth, Diriki, Rachel, (Nichole-8:00am)

EVERYONE PLEASE BRING EXTENSIONS CORDS AND POWERSTRIPS, and AAA Batteries if you have.

MICHELE: BRING A POCKET DIGITAL CAMERA.

7:30am- Arrive and load out

8:00am- Set-up and Lighting

9:15am- Roll?

Cast Call Time: Amber, Sogdiana, Lateicia, Daisy

DONT FORGET YOUR SCRIPTS.

8:15am-Arrive, dress, makeup,

***Bring your own mascara. We will have a makeup artist there, however you know how independent films go, so i suggest you bring your own makeup and stuff goes, in case the make-up artist cant make it.

9:15am- Roll? (To help things go smoothly please know your lines so we can get everyone out on time. Remember since we have many cast members, so we have to shoot the scene many times.)

Concerning Wardrobe/Hair:

Since our table read is the day before we will discuss it there, however i would bring

EVERYTHING you think would be good for your scenes.

We will be deciding on:

Scene #14, which could be your hottie pants and a tank OR hottie pants, underwear

and a bra.

Scene #28+, the outdoor truck scenes. Which should be hottie pants and a tank.

DAISY: if you have a blank ball cap or something, and solid color button down shirt.

please bring it. (no crazy colors)

ok...see you on Sunday

charlt

Please friend me on Facebook under Lumpy Melonhead and become a Fan of

Vibrancy Media.

Appendix 22

Charlotte's email after our first day of shooting:

Hey all...

I want to thank everyone that made it out to the table read on Saturday.

It was great for everyone to meet each other before we embark on the

making of AFTM.

I hope the read thru helped you identify your character and build the

story. Remember AFTM is a comedy. As you know the cast is of great size and there

are multiple scenes/locations where 5-10 people are seen together, so a production

schedule is hard to do.Ideally I would like to block out a few days/weekend, in

advance, light that specific locations, get you out and get those scenes done.

So there might be a multitude of emails asking for your schedule and

confirming them. With this many people something might get lost, so

please bear with us.

We will be constantly working on the schedules 2-4 weeks out of when we

shot last, to give everyone enough time to adjust their work schedule

and rehearse.

With that said, we started production on Sunday May 1st, started early

and got everyone out on time.

I am currently processing the footage and will try to put something

together and post it for people to see.

once again, i want to thank everyone that came out this weekend

charlt

Appendix 23

Hey everyone...(Please reply to ME that you got this)

Well we are to shoot our second scene...Anyway, here is the call

information for Friday May 6.

SHOOTING: SCENE: #55, #56, #57

Contact Info:

Producer: Charlt/Adam

Director: Adam 202-413-4121

Assistant Director: Charlt 703-927-8699

Production Manager: Latecia

DP: Charlt

PA: Tre, Daniel

Makeup: Nichole (?)

Address/Location: Anthony Dorm Room (Kelly): 301-806-2496

The University of Maryland at College Park

Queen Anne's Hall, Dorm room number is 2119

College Park, MD 20742

The dorm is located past the Stamp Student Union and Cole Field House,

on Campus Drive.

Please check the UMD website for parking information.

CREW Call Time: Adam, Lateicia, Tre, Daniel

EVERYONE PLEASE BRING EXTENSIONS CORDS AND POWER STRIPS.

ADAM: MORE LIGHTS, GEL, DRINKS, MEDICAL BOOK.

LATEICIA: BRING A POCKET DIGITAL CAMERA, YOUR SCRIPT AND

PROPS .

6:00pm- Arrive and load out (I realize that we are battling traffic, so

get there as soon as you can)

7:00pm- Set-up and Lighting

8:30pm- Roll?

CAST Call Time: Laura, Louise, Anthony, Tony

DONT FORGET YOUR SCRIPTS. We will be shoot ROLAND/JONI SCENES

FIRST,

while Anne/Kelly scenes rehearse, then we will shoot that scene.

Please know your lines so that we are not shooting till all hours of the

night.

Louise (Anne) Anthony (Kelly) 8:45/9:00pm-Arrive, dress, rehearse,

Tony (Roland) Laura (Joni) 8:15pm- Arrive, dress, read thru, shoot

***Bring your own mascara. We are trying to get a makeup artist there,

however you know how independent films go, so i suggest you bring your

own makeup and stuff goes, in case the make-up artist cant make it.

WARDROBE:

LOUISE, KELLY: Please dress in all black, however I believe that we will

have scrubs and a lab coat for you.

If you have something of this nature yourself, please bring it.

ROLAND: You should be dressed for a nice early morning drive with

Jeeves. I would bring a light jacket in case the next scene, when we

shoot it, is cold outside.

JONI: I will call you today because I have to figure out which scene

this is related to, for continuity purposes.

ok...see you on tomorrow

charlt

Please become a Facebook Fan of Vibrancy Media, and then friend me at

Lumpy Melonhead.

Appendix 24

Props

hey...

we are going to have to start collecting boxes and sheets/blankets to

create a "moving"look.

so between now and next week, please find (dont buy) boxes and gather

blankets/towels/sheets and tape

Props (the ones with the ** we already have, please email michele by

this Friday if you have any of the other items)

Easel

pill bottles (good thing i just got my Percocet filled today)

Bag

Blank Canvas**

paint brushes**

tubes of paint**

cigarette

coffee cup

bathing suit

guitar (maybe)

guitar stand (maybe)

truck

towel**

television,

moving boxes

organ**

iPod

hand held mirror

matress

Wife beater

earings

wrapped gift

vibrator

plastic plates

boom box

sofa

bubble wrap**

shaving cream

razor

Appendix 25

Charlotte's e-mail regarding the June 19, 2011 shoot.

hey

This is what's going to happen for the Morning of the 19th...I'm going to be there in the morning, but then im going to have to jet sometime during the day.

Rachel: The night before or on the way, can pick up OJ, Donuts/muffins enough for 18 people to munch on thru out the morning.

But you need to make sure that you arrive at 6am still

Quickly set it up in the kitchen cause im going to need to get you up to speed with other stuff.

Michele, Elizabeth, Adam, and myself will deal with the set-up of other stuff, while the cast is in makeup.

Shots need to be blocked and actors choreographed (for continuity) while this is happening as well.

We should start to shoot this scene at 7:15-7:30ish and be done by 11:30

Afternoon:

I will let Tom, the owner of the cafe know that you will be coming in around 4ish..

You might go over get exteriors and block shots before you set up, maybe the 3pm hour.

You know get some shots of the girls walking into the cafe.

Adam: you might just see what the coffee shop has for people to eat and

drink instead of buying food for the afternoon.

Should only be 7 people by then

ok, i think this is it

charlt

Appendix 26

hey all...

I know there were a bunch of emails going around with changes and whatnot, but with all the conflicts I'm doing the best i can. With that said, here is the schedule to finish us up to 98%. Below is a list of dates per actors, and times are TBD closer but they are approximated based on the people that got back to me.

SATURDAY MAY 5TH

EARLY MORNING (done before noon) - B-Roll shots of Joni/Roman in DC

SUNDAY May 6: (Basement Scene, Abortion Clinic)

Cast: Joni/Laura, Craig/Arty, Roman/Daniel, Nurse/Tamieka

EARLY MORNING: Joni, Craig, Roman.

AFTERNOON: Joni, Roman, Nurse

SATURDAY May 19 (depending on vehicles alt date is Saturday May 26)

(Golf Cart, Limo)

Cast: Joni/Laura, Roland/Tony, Jeeves/Mike,

MID MORNING: Jeeves

Noon-4 or earlier: Joni, Roland, Jeeves

SUNDAY May 20: (Gym Scenes, Craig playing Guitar)

Cast: Joni/Laura, Roland/Tony, Dr. John/Caleb, Sioux/Jennifer, Arty/Craig

REAL EARLY MORNING: Dr. John, Sioux,

Mid Morning/Afternoon: Joni, Roland, Dr. John, Sioux

Early Morning or Late Afternoon Craig

Ok, i think this is it for now...the only scenes we have left are the

beach/boat scenes which we will do those when the water warms up, and a

scene with Joni talking to a statue.

Appendix 15

Congratulations!

Welcome to the 2012 Beverly Hills Film Festival!

"It's the constant and determined effort that breaks down resistance,
Sweeps away all obstacles."
-Claude M. Bristol

Dear Screenplay Writer:

On behalf of the Beverly Hills Film Festival Committee, I would like to thank you for applying to this year's event, which is scheduled to take place on April 25th – 29th in the heart of Beverly Hills.

Deciding criteria and standards is never easy, and this year has been our most challenging yet! Nevertheless, we are committed and take great pride in the task-at-hand, and a fair and true decision is always reached.

With that being said, we are happy to inform you that **your screenplay has been accepted into the 2012 Beverly Hills Film Festival**. Please note that festival locations, instructions and announcements will be emailed to you shortly and will also be posted on our website, http://www.BeverlyHillsFilmFestival.com, in the coming weeks.

It's our pleasure in welcoming you on board of what will be a truly inspirational and spirited event as we celebrate the 12th anniversary of the Beverly Hills Film Festival.

Congratulations!

Nino Simone

Acting President of Beverly Hills Film Festival

Beverly Hills Film Festival
9663 Santa Monica Blvd. Suite #777
Beverly Hills, CA 90210
(310) 779-1209

Appendix 27

Charlotte's initial email to the whole cast.

Hey all...

everyone pretty much has gotten back to me about being in the film...and they are all

very excited so we have a lot of pressure on us to make this a good experience...

(or we can just get them all drunk... anyway, just an update on where we stand with

the cast.

we're on our way!!!!

Charlt

Appendix 28

Elizabeth's Email Suggesting Story-Boarding Software:

Hey, Adam!

I don't know if you've started doing this yet or not, but it's a good idea to make little

storyboards of each scene so that you have a vision of how the cut version of the

movie will look, line for line. You don't need to be an artist. Stick figures work just

fine. Or you could get fancy and use some storyboarding software like:

Reel clever: http://www.reelclever.com/tour Springboard:

http://www.freedownloadmanager.org/downloads/Springboard_6927_p/

They're both free.

Very handy for blocking an planning for lighting, etc. It's good for streamlining

shooting so we're not spending too much time on "coverage"shots. It's also a good

tool for the actors to use to see where their performances will fall in the frame. When

everyone sees what the movie in your head looks like, we'll all be on the same page.

Appendix 29

hey

i need to know what this scene Joni is coming from...so we can tell her what to wear, so when we shoot the scenes that these are related to we know what she has to wear. I dont know the script that well to know if she's coming from the beach, or park, or a memorial...

I know its a flashback where she leaves Kraig to go get drugs, but i dont know what scene that is, or where is came from before that.

let me know asap, so i can call laura so she can pack her bags before she leaves for work and plan accordingly for tomorrow.

thanks

charlt

Appendix 30

Charlottes E-Mail to the cast after a stressful weekend.

Hey all...

I just wanted to say thanks to all of you for coming out on Friday night

to help shoot those scenes.

I looked at the footage and it looks great, it needs some color

correction and audio enhancing, but the image is clear, the acting is

superb and overall, it has a nice film like quality.

Also, i apologize if i seemed a bit edgy, i was focusing on a lot of

things to make sure that those scenes got shot and get us out at a

decent hour.

anyway, once again thanks

charlt

Formal Interviews

Appendix 31

I completed 5 formal interviews, text of two included here:

I asked Shom, "Can you describe what screenings at international festivals means to you?"She wrote that

"For me film festivals are the body of organization, which, showcase, independent films in global platform. Let's take my case, I could have made my films and never enter a festival, then what's the use of my films, firstly, no one would have known what kind of creative journey am doing and what is my personal growth as a creative person would have never evaluated. Then the whole process is like cooking great pasta at home and eating it for lunch and dinner.

It opens out a great platform to creative people to believe in their work, journey and oneself, because these kind of works are so self driven, so recognition in global platform pushes the individual and motivate him.

For me, entering a global film festival specially Europe and American is a personal value gain to be recognized in the western world in the same breath competing with equal and superior talented people. It gives me great impetus to work more and differently because every festival teaches me something new , and the whole journey for me is education. Rather than competition.

My next question, "How is your process affected by digital technology?"

Shom replied, "this is a very interesting question for me. Am self-taught. So, whatever I have learnt and then discussed found possible to implement only because it's digital, otherwise I couldn't have entered into this mad world of filmmaking. And I enjoy the journey more because I don't have any academic education which I would have felt a burden, to destroy it internally and create something new out of it, because every moment of non learning process would have taken more energy of my life, rather than to create.

So, whenever my technical people tell me, it's wrong, it's not grammar, that's the moment of my joy and challenge, and immediately I say "oh..then I will have to destroy all grammar ". So digital is working so well for me. My only motivation to do something is to do something new. That's my joy of filmmaking."

Finally I asked "What does it mean for you to screen your films in Nice, Madrid, Oregon and other international locations?"

Shom replied, "firstly, I watch different films in different festivals, secondly, I meet talented people from all over the world and my experience is just wonderful, it's not only meeting them, it's the communication I have with them in their creative life or personal life , opens out a whole gamut of a world I want to know, understand and get enriched about.

It opens my universe, and my world becomes just a dot, a point I can connect from wherever I live."

Shom finished the conversation by telling me, "I just shot a feature in Cannes after the festival :) I think am obsessed in filmmaking. Loving every moment of it. Yes. My team understands me and trust me completely :) very lucky :) to get such trust. "

Appendix 32

Interview with Jon Ryan

What year did your film play at the Cannes Film Festival? What did it mean to you?

My short film *Trivial Pursuit* was accepted to the Short Film Corner section of the 2013 Cannes Film Festival. The making of the film was such a great experience in itself, both in undergoing the production of a short film and also realizing how much I enjoyed the creative process. However, going to the festival was an eye opener on every level. I was able to get a festival pass to tons of different workshops and networking events that the festival hosts (including in competition films; for example, at that time Inside Llewyn Davis by the Cohen Brothers was in the fest). It was so much to process, it was almost overwhelming. But it threw me into a crash course on networking and also how and how not to market a production I've done.

The experience was amazing for the knowledge I gained as well as where it helped me get to. I worked a few different internships while I was still in college, one of which was at the Discovery Channel. During the interview to get this internship, the first question they asked me about was Trivial Pursuit (I had it bolded on my resume and had submitted the link in my application). And I 100% think that short film is the reason they were first interested. It also gave me something to talk about in the interview, both the education I had behind that production as well as the Festival experience it led to. This internship eventually turned into a part time, then full time

job working in production at the Discovery Channel on a number of different shows, which has been an awesome growing experience in its own right.

Especially early in a film oriented career (as I'm sure you know), it can be tough to get work, as the field is so competitive… but when we left we had an example of what we learned: our short film. A foundation and a type of business card that for me personally was huge in taking steps forward in my career…

Follow up. How did it change your identity? How did others change, your interior monologue shift?

So the festival runs about 2 weeks and to be honest my sense of identity the first week and the second week were very different than each other. The first week I felt incredible, being so close to all things film and this industry that I had (and still have) plans to be a part of. But during the second week of the festival I have to say I began feeling a little crestfallen (progressively more and more). Yes, I was here and so close to this industry but it was very clear that I was still extremely far from being where I wanted to. I felt this especially before an in-competition film's premier, and you could see the director/crew/stars walking into the theater to show this movie they had worked so hard on. But I was separated by literally hundreds of people, a literal/metaphorical barrier of people, all who had very similar aspirations as mine blocking my path and view to the movie's premier. I was there but certainly not the one walking into the big theater.

So the second week made me much more contemplative and when I returned back to the US, I did a lot of soul searching, thinking about goals and what I wanted to

achieve. And then after this I felt a revitalized motivation to go out and start putting in work. I changed my mindset because I knew there was so far to go and that I would have to work very, very hard and do a lot more if I wanted to reach my goals. The interior monologue had shifted from "I love this and want to do it"into "I love this now how do I do it."Which was great because to figure that question out, I began saying "Yes"to anything film/video related, working on short films in different aspects (writing/acting, etc.), shooting various promotional productions, doing multimedia journalism and working a number of different internships. A lot of trial and error but a lot of learning and a lot of growing. With others I found myself gravitating towards people who were in motion, doing things, working on something as opposed to some who just talked about doing something. Being around those people in motion was just what I wanted, it kept me motivated and involved mentally in this act of doing.

So in all, the short film and experience at Cannes did change me in regards to being honest with myself about where I'm at professionally and skill wise (then, now, and constantly moving forward). There was a big emotional dip at the festival but it led to a very profound personal realization that there's work to be done if I want to find success, so I'd better get to it.

The more I think about this the more and more I realize the impacts!

Film Festival Application Process

Appendix 33

Dear Joe,

We recently celebrated just our 2nd anniversary here at FilmFreeway. What an incredible journey it's been so far. Here's a quick update:

There are now nearly 3,700 film festivals and creative contests using FilmFreeway to reach more than 250,000 filmmakers and artists worldwide!

FilmFreeway now provides submission services to 31 Academy Award accredited festivals, the most of any submission platform.

HBO just announced that they have left Withoutabox and opened their prestigious HBOAccess Directing Fellowship exclusively on FilmFreeway. We're big fans and very excited to have them on board. Don't forget, winter is coming!

Lastly, according to Alexa.com, FilmFreeway now ranks nearly 20,000 websites ahead of Withoutabox in global web traffic, making FilmFreeway far and away the #1 submission platform in the world.

The bottom line is none of this would have been possible without your support.

Thank you from your friends at FilmFreeway!

FilmFreeway

Film Festival Response to AFTM

Appendix 34

Dear Adam,

We are pleased to inform you that your script "Aspirin for the masses" has been

selected for the second round of consideration for the 2012 January Screenwriters

Lab! Please send a hard copy of the complete script to:

    Cullen Conly

    Sundance Institute

    8530 Wilshire Bl. Ste. 300

    Beverly Hills, CA 90211

 **Please note your application number on the cover page of your script. Your

application number is 1622112.

You may send the script using the delivery service of your choice (USPS, Federal

Express, etc.), but it must be postmarked no later than August 22, 2011. If you wish

to receive timely confirmation of the script's arrival, we recommend using a delivery

service which allows you to track the package and provides delivery confirmation.

Also, please note that notifications for the second round are done on a rolling basis,

so if you have submitted more than one application, you may not hear back about all

of your submissions at the same time. You should receive notification about all of

your submissions no later than August 15, 2011.

All applicants will be notified about final selections for the Lab no later than

December 16, 2011. If you have any questions, please contact me at

featurefilmprogram@sundance.org .

Congratulations again,

Cullen Conly

Sundance Institute, Feature Film Program

Appendix 35

Aspirin for the Masses web presence and press.

Laurels:

https://www.dropbox.com/sh/uy5t98ajjnt9era/AABS252yvrRRQl1JUPP3Yyjga?dl=0

Poster:

https://www.dropbox.com/s/q0yocqci8ct9pw5/AFTM%20Poster%20%2872%29.jpg?

dl=0

Web pages:

http://www.imdb.com/title/tt4078932/

http://www.tunasaladsuperpipeline.com/

https://www.facebook.com/groups/123589247793595/

https://vimeo.com/channels/aspirin4masses

https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/338041289/aspirin-for-the-masses

http://www.indiefestnow.com/Ondemand/day-04/

http://www.sttropezinternationalfilmfestival.com/st-tropez-iff-official-nominations/

http://lacinefest.weebly.com/march.html

http://www.sttropezinternationalfilmfestival.com/festival-programme/may-15th-

2015-screening-room-2/

http://audiencenow.org/ny-official-selection-2/

http://www.beverlyhillsfilmfestival.com/gallery_2012_screen.php

http://fogsv.org/selected-films/

http://fogsv.org/about/awards/

http://fogsv.org/aspirin-of-the-masses/

http://www.thefilmcatalogue.com/catalog/FilmDetail.php?id=20484

http://filmfestinternational.com/november-6th-2015-room-2-milan-iff/

http://moodringvintageposters.blogspot.com/

https://www.arhu.umd.edu/events/film-premiere-and-discussion-aspirin-masses

http://www.xww.com.au/no-competition-and-no-competition-new-film-makers-official-selected-phoenix-film-festival-melbourne-2015

http://filmmakersoftheyear.com/winners.htm

http://www.filmfestivalsalliance.org/november%202015/screening_schedule.htm

http://filmfestinternational.com/milan-iff-2015-filmmaker-award-winners/

http://miamindiefest.com/official-selections-mindie-february-2016/#feature

Press coverage:

http://tdps.umd.edu/news/phd-candidate-adam-nixons-aspirin-masses-premiere-may-14-16-st-tropez-international-film

http://www.film.umd.edu/events/aspirin-masses-pre-premiere

http://tdps.umd.edu/news/aspirin-masses-phd-candidate-adam-nixon-online-screening

https://unwindumd.wordpress.com/2014/12/09/maryland-professor-eyes-festival-berth-with-feature-film/

https://unwindumd.wordpress.com/2014/12/11/maryland-professor-eyes-festival-berth-with-feature-film-2/

http://www.livearts.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/NEW-PLAY-FESTIVAL.pdf

Appendix 36

Festival Applications for Aspirin for the Masses

Sundance Film Festival
Slamdance Film Festival
SXSW Film and Music Festival
Tribeca Film Festival
Berlin Independent Film Festival
Annapolis Film Festival
Bare Bones International Film & Music Festival
San Francisco IndyFest
Los Angeles Independent Film Festival
Indie Film Depot
San Francisco Global Movie Fest
Ventura Film Festival
Westwood Film Festival
Tahoe Film Festival
Big Sur Film Festival
VHSL Film Festival
Grace Film Festival
Cannes Underground Film Festival
Beverly Hills Film Festival

Mountain Film Festival
DC Independent Film Festival
Traverse City Film Festival
Kanyakumari International Film Festival, India
CinePort Film Festival
MMiFF
Sofia Menar Film Festival
NexT International Film Festival
Grace Film Festival
St Tropez & Nice International Film Festival
#TOFF The Online Film Festival
Chesapeake Film Festival
Love Film Festival
Amsterdam Lift Off Film Festival
Mongolia Film Festival
Napa Valley Film Festival
Catalina Film Festival
New Orleans Film Festival
San Francisco Film Awards
New York Audience Now
Khajuraho International Film Festival

Silk Road Film Festival
Scarborough Film Festival
The Flyway Film Festival
Fliqio
Sundance Screenwriting Competition
Los Angeles Film and Script Festival
DC Independent Film Festival
CinePort Film Festival
Indie Film Depot
Mise en Scene Film Festival
Los Angeles International Underground Film Festival
New York Screenplay Contest
SoCal Independent Film Festival
Slamdance Screenwriting Contest
Nantucket Film Festival and Screenplay Competition
Script Pipeline Screenwriting Competition
West Field Screenwriting Awards
Big Bear Lake Screenwriting Competition
Cannes Independent Film Festival
Lottery Film Festival
Ars Independent Festival

People of Passion International Film Festival
Long Beach Indi International Film Festival
Phnom Penh International Film Festival
2015 Student Academy Awards
Student International Film Festival
Balkan Film and Food Festival
CINE Golden Eagle Awards for Independent and Emerging Media
Filmmakers of the Year Film Festival
Borealis Film Festival
River Film Festival
Underground FilmFest
Italy International Film Festival
Whistler Film Festival
Skyway Film Festival
Jamaica Film Festival
Los Angeles CineFest
St. Louis International Film Festival
Santa Fe Independent Film Festival
Regards au Longs-Courts
Kashmir International Film and Cultural Festival
Split Film Festival/International Festival of New Film

Newtown Film Festival
Pervolia International Film Festival
Voices from the Waters International Traveling Film FestivalColch
Colchester Film Festival
Aruba International Film Festival
Depth of Field International Film Festival
Southeastern International Film Festival
Cabo Verde International Film Festival
Cinevana - Austin Film Festival
London International Film Festival
Toronto World International Film Festival
Hong Kong World International Film Festival
New York International Film Festival
Lumière 2015 - 6th CinemAvvenire Film Festival
Phoenix Film Festival Melbourne
St.Petersburg International Festival of Debut and Student Films
Emerge Film Festival of Maine
USA Film Festival
Indie Film Festival - Switzerland
All Seas Film Festival
Future Film Festival

Paris International Film Festival
International Filmmaker Festival of World Cinema BERLIN
Green Mountain Film Festival
Maryland International Film Festival
Berlin World International Film Festival
Hong Kong Arthouse Film Festival
Cine Beacon
Sunset Boulevard International Film Festival
Athens International Digital Film Festival
Weigel International Student Film Festival
Tenerife International Film Festival in Berlin 2016
International Open Film Festival (IOFF)
Verona International Film Festival
Manhattan Independent Film Festival
Ammar Popular Film Festival (APFF)
International Uranium Film Festival
Exil FilmFestivalen
Norwich Radical Film Festival
Silver Dollar Film Festival
Cameroon International Film Festival - CAMIFF
qFLIX Philadelphia 2016

The Film Festival at Little Washington
Toronto World International Film Festival
Broken Knuckle Film Festival
Miami Independent Film Festival
International Open Film Festival (IOFF)
Helsinki Intl Film Festival - Love & Anarchy
IndieWise FREE Virtual Festival
Los Angeles World International Film Festival
Highway 61 Film Festival
Focus International Film Festival
Sydney World Film Festival
Silver Lake Picture Show
Toronto Arthouse Film Festival
Grand IndieWise Convention 2017
San Mauro Turin International Film Festival (STIFF) 2018

Appendix 37

Film Festival Selections 2011-2018

San Francisco Global Movie Fest 2015 – Best Feature United States
Mountain Film Festival 2015 – Jury Prize
Cannes Underground Film Festival 2015 – Audience Award
International Festival of World Cinema, Milan 2015 – Best Cinematography in a Feature Film /Best Feature Film Nominee/Best Director Nominee/Best Screenplay Nominee/Best Editing Nominee
Filmmakers of the Year Film Festival Jakarta, Indonesia 2015 – Silver Award Best International Feature Film / Silver Award Best Director
San Tropez International Film Festival 2015 – World Premiere/Jury Award Nominee/Best Director Nominee/Best Actor Nominee/Best Actress Nominee/Best Editing Nominee/Best Makeup Nominee
Film Fest International-Berlin 2016 – Best Feature Comedy/Best Feature Screenplay Nominee
Tenerife International Film Festival 2016 – Official Selection
Indie Film Festival Switzerland 2015 – Official Selection
Phoenix Film Festival 2015 Melbourne, Australia – Official Selection/Official Nomination New Filmmaker Category
Los Angeles CineFest April 2015 – Official Selection
San Mauro Tourinese International Film Festival 2018 – Semi-Finalist
Miami Independent Film Festival, February 2016 – Official Selection

New York Audience Now 2015 – Official Selection
All Seas Film Festival Winter 2015 – Official Selection/Best Feature Nominee
#TOFF The Online Film Festival March 2015 – Official Selection/Online Premiere
Depth of Field International Film Festival 2015 – Official Selection/Official Nominations Best in Show & Best in Category
Khajuraho International Film Festival 2015 – Official Selection Short List
International Open Film Festival 2016 - Bangladesh - Best Film-USA Nomination/ Semi-Finalist
Grand IndieWise Convention 2017– Finalist/Official Selection
Grand IndieWise Convention 2018 – Official Selection
Beverly Hills Film Festival 2012 Screenplay Competition – Official Selection/Finalist
Sundance Screenwriting Competition 2012 – Finalist/Second Round Selection
Mountain Film Festival 2011 – Sir Edmund Hillary Award in Screenwriting
Los Angeles Film and Script Festival 2011 – Honorable Mention

Theatre Festival Participation 1996-1997

Shenandoah International Playwriting Competition 1997 – Finalist
Live Arts Play Festival, Theatre IV 1996 – Official Selection/Production
Sibiu Festival for Young Professional Theatre 1996 – Official Selection, publication and production in English and Romanian translation (by Romanian poet Mircha Ivanescu)

Distribution

Appendix 38

Text of Altar E-mail announcing first Sales Revenues:

We hope this message finds you well. Attached to this e-mail you will find the first financial statement for "Aspirin for the Masses". As this is your first time receiving a statement from A&AE, we wanted to explain the layout of the attached document and remind you of how the quarterly accounting process works.

First and foremost, this statement reflects only revenue received by Altar & Associates Entertainment during the third quarter of 2017 (July through September, which is when the first monies from your film arrived on our end). Revenue that was generated during Q3, but which was not paid to A&AE until after the close of the quarter, will not be reflected on this statement, but will be reflected on future statements. For a list of other distribution platforms that will be reflected on those future statements, please consult the box in the lower left-hand corner of the statement labeled "DISTRIBUTION IN PROGRESS".

This statement can be broken down into three sections:

PAYMENTS – This section catalogues the revenue received during Q3 and where it came from (territory, platform/company and rights involved).

DEDUCTIONS – This section catalogues all deductions for expenses, including audit/delivery fees, your film's share of the cost for film market attendance and any other expenses (such as laboratory work or format conversion) that have accrued between the start of your agreement and the end of Q3.

TOTALS – This section tallies the total balance for your film (revenue minus deductions) as of the close of Q3.

If you have any questions about this statement, please "reply all" to this e-mail, or you may schedule a phone call with the A&AE team.

Thank you for your attention, and have a wonderful day.

Sincerely,

Accounting Department

Altar & Associates Entertainment, Inc.

Appendix 39

Revenue Statement – Q3 2017

PAYMENTS

Territory	Client	Rights	Type	Term	Previous payments	New payments	Bank/tax/contractual withholdings	Paid to date	Notes
China (mainland)	China Mobile	SVOD	Non-exclusive	2 years	N/A	$99.45	N/A	$99.45	Installment 1 of 4
					Total previous payments	**Total new payments**	**Total withholdings**	**Total paid to date**	
					N/A	$99.45	N/A	$99.45	

DEDUCTIONS

ASPIRIN FOR THE MASSES

Deduction type	Previous deductions	New deductions	Deductions to date	Notes
Administration fee	N/A	$4,500.00	$4,500.00	One-time contractual fee
Audit fee	N/A	$3,500.00	$3,500.00	One-time contractual fee
Film market attendance	N/A	$4,937.39	$4,937.39	Inception through Q3 2017
Graphic design	N/A	$25.00	$25.00	Inception through Q3 2017
Advertising	N/A	$238.55	$238.55	Inception through Q3 2017
Printing	N/A	$3.85	$3.85	Inception through Q3 2017
	Total previous deductions	**Total new deductions**	**Total deductions to date**	
	N/A	$13,204.79	$13,204.79	

DISTRIBUTION IN PROGRESS - NOT PAYABLE IN Q3 DUE TO RELEASE DATE OR PAYMENT SCHEDULE

Distribution in the following territories/on the following platforms has now commenced or is in progress. No payments from them were due or received during Q3 2017. Revenue from them will be reflected on future statements.

- Amazon.com (TVOD/SVOD) (United States)
- Amazon.co.uk (TVOD/SVOD) (United Kingdom)
- Amazon.de (TVOD/SVOD) (Germany/Austria)
- Amazon.co.jp (TVOD/SVOD) (Japan)
- Vimeo (TVOD) (Worldwide)
- Digital Media Rights Roku channels (AVOD) (North America)

TOTALS

Total paid	$99.45
Total deductions	$13,204.79
Subtotal	-$13,105.34
Minus commission (35%)	N/A
Total balance	-$13,105.34

** Statement subject to revision **

Appendix 40

Revenue Statement Q4 – 2017

PAYMENTS

Territory	Client	Rights	Type	Term	Previous payments	New payments	Bank/tax/contractual withholdings	Paid to date	Notes
China (mainland)	China Mobile	SVOD	Non-exclusive	2 years	$99.45	$34.17	N/A	$133.62	Installments 1 and 2 of 4
Germany / Austria	Amazon.de	TVOD / SVOD	Non-exclusive	Ongoing	N/A	$0.04	N/A	$0.04	Revenue was generated between August and September 2017
Japan	Amazon.co.jp	TVOD / SVOD	Non-exclusive	Ongoing	N/A	$1.79	N/A	$1.79	Revenue was generated between August and September 2017
United Kingdom	Amazon.co.uk	TVOD / SVOD	Non-exclusive	Ongoing	N/A	$0.86	N/A	$0.86	Revenue was generated between August and September 2017
United States	Amazon.com	TVOD / SVOD	Non-exclusive	Ongoing	N/A	$168.62	N/A	$168.62	Revenue was generated between August and September 2017
					Total previous payments	**Total new payments**	**Total withholdings**	**Total paid to date**	
					$99.45	$205.48	N/A	$304.93	

DEDUCTIONS

Deduction type	Previous deductions	New deductions	Deductions to date	Notes
Administration fee	$4,500.00	N/A	$4,500.00	One-time contractual fee
Audit fee	$3,500.00	N/A	$3,500.00	One-time contractual fee
Film market attendance	$4,937.39	$328.81	$5,266.20	American Film Market 2017
Graphic design	$25.00	N/A	$25.00	Inception through Q4 2017
Advertising	$238.55	N/A	$238.55	Inception through Q4 2017
Printing	$3.85	N/A	$3.85	Inception through Q4 2017
Total previous deductions	**Total new deductions**	**Total deductions to date**		
$13,204.79	$328.81	$13,533.60		

DISTRIBUTION IN PROGRESS - NOT PAYABLE IN Q4 DUE TO RELEASE DATE OR PAYMENT SCHEDULE	TOTALS	
Distribution in the following territories/on the following platforms has now commenced or is in progress. No payments from them were due or received during Q4 2017. Revenue from them will be reflected on future statements.	Total paid	$304.93
	Total deductions	$13,533.60
Amazon Prime Worldwide (SVOD) (Canada/Ireland/South Africa/Australia/New Zealand/Scandinavia)	Subtotal	-$13,228.67
Digital Media Rights Roku channels (AVOD) (North America)	Minus commission (35%)	N/A
Vimeo (TVOD) (Worldwide)	Total balance	-$13,228.67

** Statement subject to revision **

382

Glossary

Cinema: Cinema can include video, film, and digital recordings. All are cinema if they are shown on a screen to an audience. Cinema can be in a public space or at a private screening for one.

Film: Film has traditionally been shot, edited, and projected to an audience from film-stock. The images in a film reflect a real place in time, as the actors in a film were in front of the camera at some point in the past, and the camera recorded that *real* event, even if it was an act of mimesis or imitation.

Depth of Field: A measurement in the Mise-en-Scene between the parts of an image in focus vs. those parts out of focus. Analogue film stock achieves a shallow depth of field that has come to have meaning. The depth of field associated with a filmed image is read as authentic by filmmakers, as cinema by an audience. Video traditionally offered a very deep depth of field. That kind of image has traditionally been understood as having less inherent beauty than film. It was usually seen in home video, television news, low budget films—including pornography—shot on videotape. The DSLR camera upended these distinctions offering low budget filmmakers a shallow depth of field in a cheap camera.

Digital cinema: Digital cinema is not film or video; it is a new form. Digital cinema shares common aesthetic constructs with film and video and can be as accessible to the fringe producer as a community theatre stage. It is like film in almost every respect and like theatre in one very important respect in that it does not require large pools of capital in its construction.

Frame Rate: the speed at which video is recorded. Film traditionally recorded 24P, video 30I.

Mise-en-scene: Traditionally mise-en-scene was used in the theatre (as conceived by Wagner) to describe the arrangement of actors and scenery on stage in a theatrical production. French New Wave film scholars adapted and applied the term to film theory. It is commonly used in film scholarship to describe everything on screen and all diegetic sound inside the narrative construct. It can be loosely understood as the milieu, or corner to corner of a cinematic image.

Sensor Type: The type of image sensor inside of the camera. Most DSLR's use a CMOS sensor. Previous video cameras used a CCD sensor. The CMOS has greater color range, offers a shallow depth of field, is similar in shape to a standard 35mm film negative in size.

Sensor Size: the height and width of the sensor in millimeters

Video: Video refers to material recorded onto analog videotape.

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391

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